The Washington Monthly

July/August 1993/$3.95

The Media, 1993

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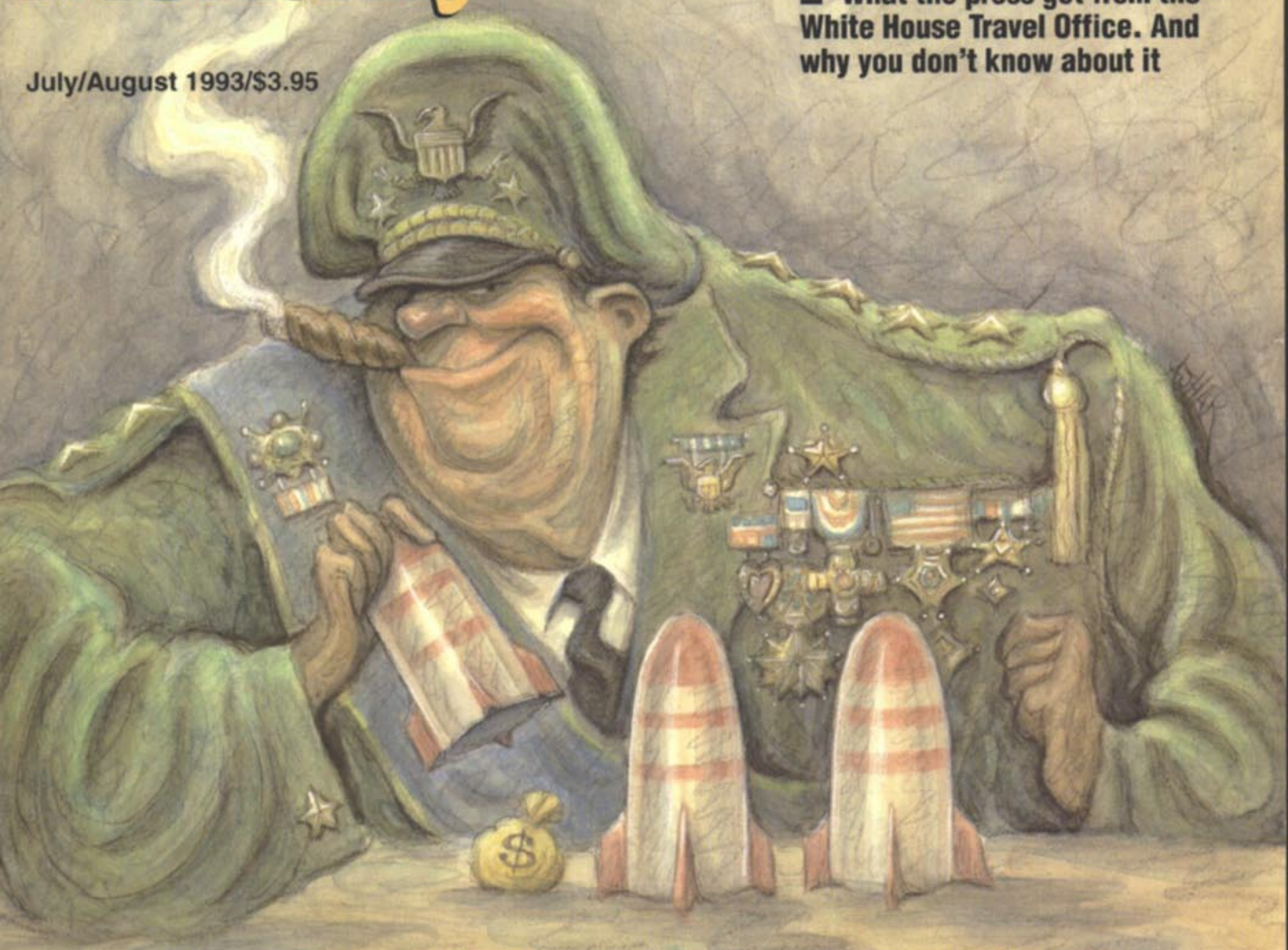

THE SHELL GAME

How the Generals will try to fleece Clinton. And what he can do to stop them

By David Segal

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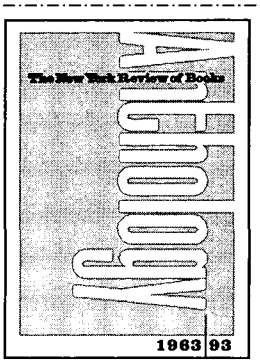

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The Washington Monthly

Volume Twenty-Five, Numbers Seven and Eight July/August 1993

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LETTERS

Religious writing

"What the Religious Right Can Teach the New Democrats" [Jon Meacham, April] may end up as one of the groundbreaking articles for which *The Washington Monthly* is famous. The idea that a dialogue can be carried on with evangelical Christians that could be of benefit to society in the discussion of values is new territory for the mainstream press.

SUSAN B. CLAYTON
Goleta, California

Double your money

Reading the article "Tort and Retort: An Exchange" [May] by Charles Peters and Anthony Lewis, I think you both overlooked an obvious variation on the "loser pays" system for tort-associated legal expenses . . . a solution that solves many of the problems Mr. Lewis describes: Have the loser pay both sets of court costs, but limit the payback of all other legal expenses, for attorneys, detectives, etc. to the lesser of what each of the two sides paid. Thus, if I sue General Motors and lose, I don't pay millions for the high priced legal team they bring in; rather, I pay my expenses and, at most, only that much again towards theirs. If I win, chances are, as a private citizen, I get all my expenses back, unless they truly fight the suit "on the cheap." Of course, for corporations keeping counsel on permanent retainer, attorney costs would have to be allocated fairly, particularly to keep a losing company from claiming that almost nothing was spent on their legal expenses. For example, a corporation's total legal retainer fees for each year could be proportionally allocated based on all the trials in which they are involved, using attorney hours in court as a measure.

JOEL S. DAVIS
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Brown nosing

No matter how badly he may have wanted to trash Ira Magaziner, David Segal's sweeping remarks about the Brown University curriculum reveal his ignorance and failure to research his subject ["Mr. Break-It," May].

Brown's curriculum is starting to look thin and dated? Nonsense. The curriculum has evolved and grown over the last 23 years, and now includes some 1,700 courses and 85 majors. How do you measure its success? Strong support for the curriculum continues among faculty and students and a recent independent Yankelovich survey showed that more than 89 percent of graduates would go to Brown again, and 92 percent want the Brown experience for their children. Brown graduates are actively sought by the nation's top medical, law, business, and graduate schools, as well as by the leading organizations in both the public and private sector. More than 90 percent of Brown's seniors gain admission to the graduate or professional school of their choice.

Brown has no requirements and therefore is easy? Hardly. Admission itself is an achievement. Brown is among the top six universities for selection of its students, with 83 percent of admitted applicants coming from the the top 5 percent of their high school classes. Brown graduates must complete a minimum of 30 courses. (Brown does not grant advanced placement credit, and D is not a passing grade.) Students plan the liberal education component of their studies in consultation with faculty advisers, rather than being told what to study (apparently a radical idea for Mr. Segal). Every academic major requires a set of courses as rigorous as any in the country, and graduates must also demonstrate writing competency.

Grade inflation? Wrong again. While honors graduates at other universities often account for 50 percent of graduating classes, Brown's faculty has voted that no more than 20 percent of Brown graduates can receive University honors.

And Segal's vision of a craven faculty adopting the Magaziner/Maxwell curriculum without a whimper, lest it face student violence—no way. The Brown faculty did not adopt the proposal wholesale. They debated it rigorously and revised it several times before adoption. In subsequent years, they have monitored it closely and made judicious revisions periodically.

Segal affects the confident ease of an insider, and his breezy, clever style might strike some readers as convincing. I know that Ira can take care of himself, but I want to be certain your readers know that when Segal talks about the Brown curriculum, he is hopelessly uninformed and dead wrong.

SHEILA E. BLUMSTEIN
Dean of the College, Brown University
Providence, Rhode Island

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The author replies:

I don't doubt that smart people go to Brown, learn a lot, would want to go again, and land lucrative jobs when they leave. After all, it's an Ivy League school—attracting and educating smart people who can then use their degrees to find gainful employment is the least Brown can do.

My point, however, is still that the Brown curriculum is rigged so that a person could win that terrific credential without furrowing, let alone moistening, the brow. If geography comes naturally to you, just take geography courses. If you fail one of those courses, you can strike it from the record. And you need only 30 credits worth of those courses for a diploma. Rules like that are what give Brown its "vacation school" reputation.

I don't put much stock in college surveys, but since Ms. Blumstein brought one up, I'll bring up another. In the 1993 edition of *U.S. News*' ranking of universities, Brown came in at number 18, dead last among the Ivies and behind relative upstarts like Rice University and Northwestern.

Sour grapes

On behalf of the Wine Institute, an association of 450 California wineries, I'm writing to correct some misstatements in Ben Sherwood's article, "Wine and Poses" [May].

In sharp contrast to Mr. Sherwood's characterization, the California wine industry does not consider wine to be a health tonic nor do we advocate drinking for health reasons. We do, however, emphatically rebut the medically and socially invalid political position that portrays any wine consumption as risk-taking behavior. Consumer surveys show that most people who drink wine do so in moderation and for pleasure, mainly to enhance meals and social occasions. Consumers should not be denied the scientific information demonstrating that moderate wine drinking can be part of a well-balanced lifestyle.

Dozens of scientific studies have documented that a moderate amount of alcohol, consumed as wine, beer, or spirits, is associated with a 25-45 percent lower risk of heart disease, which refutes Mr. Sherwood's statement that "it's also not entirely clear that it's the alcohol in wine that helps the heart." However, more recent wine-specific studies have reported on non-health benefits enjoyed by moderate wine consumers. Finally, to set the record straight, funding for nearly all the epidemiological data on the subject of wine and health has come from independent universities and government agencies such as the National Institutes of Health, *not* the wine industry.

Wine is not medicine. It complements food as part of an optimal diet and lifestyle. The Harvard University School of Public Health recently recognized this quality by including it in its traditional Mediterranean Diet recommendations, which also include pasta, polenta, olive oil, and fresh fruits and vegetables. The ancient secrets of modern nutrition should not be denied.

JOHN DE LUCA
President, The Wine Institute
San Francisco, California

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The author replies:

While claiming to correct so-called "misstatements" in my article, Mr. De Luca's letter inadvertently captures the fundamental problem with the wine industry's claims about alcohol and health. Mr. De Luca first insists "the California wine industry does not consider wine to be a health tonic nor do we advocate drinking for health reasons." But he then goes on to mention "dozens of scientific studies" documenting the protective effects of alcoholic beverages on heart disease. He also asserts that wine "complements food as part of an optimal diet and lifestyle." Mr. De Luca and the wine industry want it both ways.

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No one disputes the existence of independent scientific research suggesting that alcohol may be good for the heart. But, as my article suggested, the prepackaging of booze as a health food isn't so simple or straightforward. So-called moderate alcohol consumption is tricky to define or control—and the public health dangers are considerable. Also, new research suggests that it may be the grapes—not necessarily the alcohol—that reduce the risk of coronary heart disease. Ultimately, there is no good health reason to start drinking or to drink more.

Don't kill the lawyers

I am a hard-working lawyer and probably what most people would call unrepentantly idealistic. I don't make much money defending and processing "illegal aliens" through an unbelievably complicated and arbitrary morass of immigration law and regulations.

Although I like your publication, I am finally tired of your universal lawyer-bashing. It is simply bad journalism. If you cannot distinguish between lawyer-lobbyists, lawyer-politicians, legal-aid lawyers, solo practitioners, prosecutors, corporate lawyers, etc., and the wide range of people on the ethical scale in each of these categories, then you are simply intellectually lazy.

PETER HIRSCH
New York, New York

The editor replies:

I do love to bash the greedy Iagos, the Typhoid Marys of paranoia, who make up far too much of the bar. But, as I try to emphasize every six months or so, I very much admire the lawyers who try to live up to the highest ideals of the profession. They do exist; I just wish that they made up a higher proportion of practicing attorneys.

Murdered sleep

Charles Peters' reference to "a nonlethal chemical that would render people unconscious for 24 hours or so" [Tilting At Windmills, June] reminds me that back in the sixties when I was in Air Force R&D, there was some talk about it, but the idea never went anywhere as far as I know. We called it Pixy Dust: "Just sprinkle it over the battlefield and everyone lays down and goes to sleep."

I suspect that the idea is more attractive than it is practical—a liberal's equivalent to Star Wars. A nonlethal chemical would certainly be a lot easier to evade than the multitude of lethal agents that are already available. Just the knowledge of its existence would ensure the development of effective countermeasures.

PAUL N. NASH
Arlington, Virginia

Trustworthy funds

You suggest that there is not much difference between welfare payments and payments from a trust fund established via inherited wealth [Tilting at Windmills, May].

Your point seems to be that in both cases, someone is receiving something without having to work for it. Fair enough; but if you accept the concept that a person has the right to own property (as I think you must), there's a very fundamental difference between the two types of money.

Welfare money is derived from taxation. People who are taxed have no say in the matter; the money is taken from them whether they like it or not, and the penalties for non-compliance are severe. By contrast, private wealth is usually accumulated through transactions where there is free will on both sides and no implicit threat. To equate this private wealth with "public" money (i.e. money that has been taken from the people for redistribution, regardless of their desires in the matter) is quite wrong.

You may feel that the practice of passing wealth from one generation to the next is socially retrogressive, and I agree that it tends to result in a stratified society. However, that is a separate issue.

CHARLES PLATT
New York, New York

Absent professors

Your article ["Class Dismissed," Jon Meacham, May] overlooked a factor pushing universities toward research. Prestigious research universities turn out more Ph.D.s than other strong research universities can absorb. The "extras" go to less prestigious schools. Many of these young faculty are anxious to return to a school like their graduate school. If this is not possible, some are determined to remake their current department in the image of their former one. Either way, they want an environment most conducive to research and a reward structure that matches.

JOHN GRUHL
Lincoln, Nebraska

Class war

When you choose anew to natter at academe I hope you will try to find someone better informed, more familiar, or both, with that little world than Jon Meacham (or others who have appeared in your pages). I know that you want to get the message across that academics teach too little and are not particularly good at it when they do, but your writers tend simply to flail at the subject.

There is a great need for reform in higher education, which has become all too institutionalized. The students are used by the institutions to advance institutional ends that often have little to do with genuine education. One might say that getting the teachers back into the classrooms and making them teach more classes would be a good beginning, but if the teachers saw that as a punishment and the managers found it rewarding, then the wrong people would profit, and the institutionalization of education would probably be advanced.

Real reform comes when it, and not piecemeal solutions, is advanced, and when the real clientele (obviously not the students and certainly not the faculty) want them. As Jacques Barzun has said, the public knows how to get what it wants—witness the demands for sports and other entertainment from putative educational institutions. For now they seem to be getting enough of what they want to be more or less satisfied.

ROGER HORN
Clarion, Pennsylania

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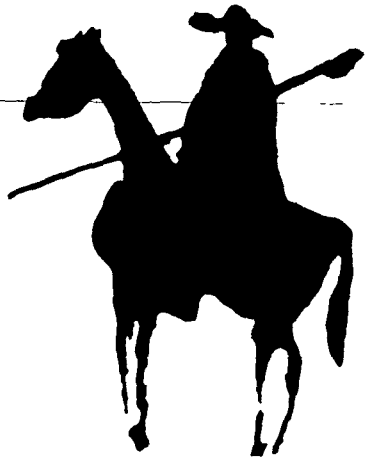
TILTING AT WINDMILLS



You had to feel sorry for Bill Clinton when he got all those boos and catcalls while trying to speak at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. It was such a cruel reward for trying to do the right thing.

It reminded me that it was time to proclaim the Peters Rule on Booing. Booing is permissible—though seldom, if ever, desirable—after a speaker has been introduced and after he finishes, but it should never occur when it drowns out or otherwise interferes with his right to speak. . . .

But you can understand some veterans' urge to boo the Clintonites, most of whom have no experience with the military. In fact, the White House is conducting tours of military installations and Navy ships for guess who? The White House staff. Since they haven't served in the armed forces, something has to be done to try to give them some minimal familiarity with the military. But the 8-hour visits that are planned are ridiculous tokenism. It seems very likely that we're not going to have a sensible military policy until more of the educated elite that oversees the armed forces actually serves in the military and thus acquires first hand experience of military culture, of where the fat is in the service bureaucracies, and of what we need and don't need to defend the interests of this country. . . .

Why are conservatives so unwilling to see any merit in liberal proposals? The blindly automatic opposition that Republicans in Congress are giving Bill Clinton is just one example. Democrats were much more willing to help George Bush and Ronald Reagan. David Gergen may be an exception, and I applaud him for it, but an exception he surely is.

The New Democrats and the neoliberal movement with which this magazine has been associated are both based on the need for liberals and Democrats to be willing to face the fact that sometimes conservatives are right. There is no comparable movement in the Republican party.

Yet it has always seemed to me that, as my old friend Noel Epstein puts it, "In most arguments both sides are partly right and partly wrong." This is just plain common sense based on experience, yet conservatives insist on denying it and saying they are always right.

I can't believe that this kind of rigidity will in the long run be rewarded by the voters. Most especially, I don't believe that Bob Dole or Phil Gramm will ever achieve their goal of being elected president if they do not display more flexibility and more willingness to try to find solutions that the majority can agree to.

Nor do I believe that reasonable Republicans like Senators Cohen, Jeffords, Chafee, and Kassebaum will meet their Maker with serenity if they continue to let themselves be bullied into following the leadership of the Doles and Gramms. . . .

One issue on which both the conservatives and the liberals appear to have a point is on the matter of vaccinations for the poor. The Clinton administration has argued that the problem is a lack of money or prices that are too high. In this, they are partly right. But the conservatives are also right to say that too many poor families don't take advantage of existing programs. Here in Washington, for example, 900 out of 1000 children on Medicaid were taken to get the first of two shots, but more than 450 were not taken back for their second. . . .

This magazine has campaigned to have this country adopt a health care system modeled on Canada's which offers free choice of physician and the elimination of multiple bureaucracies in favor of a single payer, the government. You wouldn't guess it from the coverage the system has gotten lately, but it works well in Canada and, with even less publicity, a variation of it is working well in Germany. The cost of health care in Germany is $1,695 per year per capita, compared to our $2,867. If our reformers are to duplicate Germany's success, they must take all the measures the Germans do to control cost. In addition, they must take radical steps to increase the percentage of primary care physicians compared to specialists. Most German doctors are primary care, whereas here most are specialists. Specialists cost a lot more. They also love to order expensive tests and procedures.

The Germans start with another advantage in that national service draftees perform 30 percent of the

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work. They each cost $21,000 less annually than the average civilian employee.

This, by the way, is another good reason to support a national service draft in this country. It may be the only way we can afford to do what needs doing in health, education, and environmental conservation and clean up. It is also good for the soul. I'm convinced most Americans would cheerfully perform national service if they weren't made to feel like suckers who were losing out on the career race by taking the necessary time out. If everyone serves, no one is going to be a sucker. . . .

One group that will try to make sure that the Canadian plan is not adopted here is the National Association of Health Underwriters. This is the organization that represents the agents who sell health insurance. Most of them would be put out of business by the Canadian plan which eliminates most private health insurance. So they've hired Patton, Boggs & Blow, one of Washington's most prominent and effective lobbying firms. It is headed by the legendary Tommy Boggs, whose sister happens to be Cokie Roberts, one of the stars of ABC News and National Public Radio.

Recently Roberts was the host of a "Nightline" show devoted to health reform on which Senator Jay Rockefeller, the Senate's leading authority on health care, appeared along with Dr. Marcia Angell, the editor of the *New England Journal of Medicine* and an advocate of the Canadian plan. Roberts did not ask Angell a single question that could have elicited an explanation of the virtues of the Canadian plan, although she did accuse Angell of wanting "to see the entire thing [the current American health system] turned upside down and completely changed." Almost all of the questions Roberts asked were directed at the politics of health reform—"when will it pass"—instead of the substantive merits of the different reform proposals. This certainly accorded with her brother's interests. Yet one knows that Cokie Roberts has too much integrity to consciously slant her reporting to serve her brother or any other lobbyist. The problem in Washington is that even the most intelligent reporters tend to adopt the values of the city's insider culture, values that put a premium on incremental politics instead of on advancing the cause of major change. . . .

Christopher Georges argues in this issue [see "Bad News Bearers," page 28] that Clinton has been treated unfairly by the media. Additional evidence to support his contention came when two of the major networks refused to carry the president's prime time press conference on June 17, and the third network carried it for only half an hour. This kind of snub is unprecedented for a president in a non-election year. All 12 of Reagan's prime time press conferences were broadcast, and only one of Bush's—which came during the 1992 campaign—was not carried live. . . .

The pace of technological advance was suggested by a movie I saw recently in which a woman hops in a stranger's car and says "may I use your phone?" obviously assuming the car is equipped with one.

I must say I hate the idea of car phones, just as I hate the idea of phones on planes, trains, and boats. The places where you used

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From May, 1993 ***Perspectiva*** *magazine* – **Gente:** Entrevista con violinista Anne-Sophie Mutter: "La música de Lutoslawski me emociona **de tal manera que** ha **enriquecido** mis interpretaciones. Sus **obras** han inspirado mi manera de **tocar** los conciertos de Brahms y de Beethoven . . . ."

From April, 1993 ***Perspectiva*** *magazine* – **Nacional:** El **atentado** contra las **Torres Gemelas** de Manhattan causó cinco muertos y más de mil **heridos**. La policía de Nueva York **detuvo** a un **supuesto integrista** islámico, Mohamed Salameh . . . .

From March, 1993 ***Perspectiva*** *magazine* – **Ecología:** *El Niño* es una **corriente** periódica de aire caliente en el Pacífico. **Surge** de un calentamiento anormal de las aguas ecuatoriales del Pacífico. Hace algunas zonas más húmedas, más **secas** o más **cálidas** de lo normal. Los científicos creen que *El Niño* . . . .

Glosario bilingüe

This glossary defines words only in the context as they appear in BOLD in these articles. The symbol ◊ indicates an idiomatic phrase.

a través de ◊ by means of
abrazar v. to embrace
atentado nm. attack
cadena nf. network
cálido/a adj. hot
corriente nf. current
de tal manera que ◊ in such a way that
detuvo (detener) v. arrested; detained
enriquecer v. to enrich
herido/a nm/f. injured (person)
integrista nm/f. reactionary (person)
obra nf. work; piece
red nf. network; system
seco/a adj. dry
sonido nm. sound
supuesto/a adj. alleged
surgir v. to appear
tendido nm. cable
tocar v. to play
Torres Gemelas ◊ Twin Towers

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to be able to escape for at least a little while are disappearing. Even in the most remote wilderness, where in times gone by you could be reached only by someone who had backpacked for days or weeks, cellular phones now mean that the office can instantaneously inform you of the latest in things to worry about. . . .

This magazine often seems to be alone in recognizing the existence and dimension of the public employee pension scandal. But I'm happy to report that K.W. Lee of the *Sacramento Union* recently contributed an excellent account of how California taxpayers are being bilked by retirees. State Supreme Court Justice Stanley Mosk, for example, is being paid a salary of $121,207 for his judicial services while also enjoying a pension of $70,003 as a former attorney general. But the champion has to be Richard M. Nevins, who collects $194,814 a year as a retired member of the Board of Equalization. This generous benefit is doubtless justified by the heavy burden of his official duties, which consisted of attending one meeting a month. The widow of an Equalization Board member is getting $164,069 per year. When Nevins was campaigning for his final term on the board, the main plank in his platform was that it would cost less to keep him in office than to retire him. He, of course, was right. His past salary was considerably less than half of what he now receives in retirement. . . .

You might be interested in learning how that pension for Richard Nevins, the Equalization Board member, was computed. His base pension is 60 percent of his final salary, which was $82,169. This is then increased by cost-of-living adjustments for every year since 1954, a year that the California legislature seems to have picked out of a hat. This calculation increases his pension by a stunning 421.6 percent. His monthly base pension of $4,105 is added to his COLA of $17,360 to produce a total of $21,466 a month to which he would be entitled if he had not chosen to take a reduction to $16,234 a month so that his wife can continue to get the pension after his death. . . .

These California pensions are, by the way, also paid to former public officials who are doing time in prison for corruption in office. . . .

You may not realize it, but many other former public employees are, primarily because of cumulative COLAs, paid more for not working in retirement than they were when they were on active duty. This practice, if it continues much longer, will bankrupt city, state, and federal treasuries or impose impossible tax burdens on working people. The solution is to require that once a certain threshold is reached—say, somewhere between $25,000 and $50,000—a retired public employee can never receive more in retirement pay than he got on the job. It should be remembered that public employees' salaries long ago departed from the peon class. Since the sixties, many of them have been paid well enough—remember Stanley Mosk's salary—that they have been able to put aside money for their retirement to supplement whatever they get from Social Security and government pension funds.

If we don't face real waste such as excessive pensions, we are going to have to cut services that we really need, such as schools, police and fire protection, garbage removal, sewer and water

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maintenance, public health personnel, and facilities. This is going to be a hard fight, because legislators and bureaucrats and judges—again, remember Stanley Mosk—are in on the hustle and will resist change with the dedicated brilliance they seem to attain only when they are protecting their own interests.

Just one tiny example of what I'm talking about comes from San Jose, California, where the members of the city council, having agreed that the city's budget must be cut by $40 million, refused to share the burden by reducing their staffs. Two of the council members have three assistants. Think about it. It wasn't very long ago when you could have been laughed at for saying a city council member needed one assistant, let alone three. I was in a state legislature 30 years ago. I had zero assistants. I had no office, just my desk on the floor of the House. Today, all over the country, city councils, and state legislators have been trying to imitate Congress. And you know what that means. . . .

If you don't think congressional salaries are higher than necessary, consider that *The Washington Post* recently reported that only a handful of freshmen Congressmen earned in their previous job "an amount equal to half or more of their congressional salaries." . . .

This magazine does not publish liquor ads. Unfortunately, most magazines do. The result is that when Absolut Vodka recently held "auditions" from publications that sought its advertising, Stuart Elliot of *The New York Times* described "the sight of smart, confident, and aggressive people from prestigious magazines genuflecting before . . . liquor advertising. . . . In some cases they even hinted at shaping their editorial content to satisfy the advertiser. ". . .

When people say they want to cap entitlements, be sure to ask precisely what they mean. A cap that restricts payments to the affluent is almost certain to be desirable, but one that hurts those who are totally or almost entirely dependent on small pensions is probably not. . . .

There have been several recent headlines that have made me nervous—I can hear you saying that there have been a lot more than several that made you jumpy—but I'm talking not about the ones that I know we had the same reaction to but about a few you might have missed because they were on back pages. The first was "Kurds Threatened With Disaster If U.N. Can't Raise $500 Million." If I feel bad about the Bosnian Moslems—and I desperately wish I could think of something effective we could do for them—I feel much worse about the Kurds. This country's leaders—Henry Kissinger and George Bush are among the culprits—have repeatedly embraced them when we needed them for one reason or another and then cast them into the darkness when they have served our purposes. How can we bear to forsake them once more!

Another headline that disturbs me was "Fewer Factory Jobs Filled As Factories Rely On Overtime." Health insurance and Social Security taxes are such a disincentive to new jobs that the typical company is pressuring its present employees to work long hours to avoid having to pay the additional benefits. This, as we have tried to point out, is a new contradiction of capitalism that needs a new Karl Marx to dramatize.

The last of the troubling headlines is "In Yen Windfall, U.S. Companies Opt for Profits." For more than two decades, American manufacturers have repeatedly blown opportunities to beat the Japanese by choosing to seize short-term profits instead of using low prices to increase their market share. The same mistake is being made again as the yen rises and the dollar declines. Ford, for example, has already raised its 1993 model prices three times. This insane focus on the short term is, by the way, another contradiction of modern American capitalism. . . .

But I did find a headline that cheered me up: "Tailhook Inquiry Halts Jet Shows." How wonderful! Why risk lives, planes, and money on shows whose essential appeal is the same as auto racing: When is the crash going to happen and how gruesome will it be? So some good, after all, may come out of Tailhook for the offending flyers. By misbehaving, they may have saved their lives and those of innocent bystanders as well.

Another headline I liked was "More Incentives in Chiefs' Pay." The phenomenon of declining corporate profits accompanied by increasing executive compensation has been still another contradiction of modern American capitalism. But the good news is that, from 1990 to 1992, performance-based incentives for CEOs grew while regular salaries, which are not tied to how well the company does for its stockholders, remained stable. . . .

The real motive behind the media's indignation about Travelgate may have been revealed when one White House correspondent, ABC's Brit Hume, complained about the quality of service on the first press plane chartered by the new regime. Hume was outraged. The reporters, it seems, were served a cold, instead of the usual hot, meal. . . .

—*Charles Peters*

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Home Not Alone

Apartments carved out of homes are one smart way to beat the low-cost housing crunch. So how come most states won't legalize them?

by Louis Jacobson

In a city near you, tens of thousands of otherwise upstanding citizens are engaged in criminal activity. The outlaws are everywhere: 40,000 families in Los Angeles, one of every three homeowners in Vancouver, 100,000 people in Ontario. And this time the criminals aren't nannies. They're grannies. Their crime has nothing to do with Social Security taxes; it's their apartments.

They are living in rooms, accessory apartments—rooms that have been added to, or carved out of a single-family home. Or perhaps they're living in a backyard cottage called "granny flats." *(We know you're in there, pops, so come out with your hands up.)*

In the vast majority of cities and counties in the United States, these add-ons run afoul of zoning ordinances, but thousands of cash-strapped home-owners are building them anyway. They know that neighbors are usually incensed by the idea, that civic associations often hate them too, and they know they are breaking the law. But they'll also tell you that these apartments are one swift and sensible way to ease the affordable housing crunch. As baby-boomers start retiring and the need for innovative housing solutions become more urgent, the logic of accessory apartments might just remain somehow irresistible.

These units can guarantee first-time home buyers rental income that will help them pay their bills. (In some parts of Canada, accessory units are called "mortgage helpers.") Empty nesters coping with college costs or other expenditures can trade what they have in excess—living space—for what they lack: money. Accessory units can also help divorced men and women saddled with a home they couldn't afford with one income. On the flip side, couples who aren't ready to own a home can rent an accessory unit in a neighborhood they couldn't otherwise afford.

Accessory apartments are also a boon to the elderly. A 1989 survey by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) found that seniors are virtually unanimous in one desire: 86 percent never want to move from their present home. Aging in place, however, is expensive. Those seniors who

Louis Jacobson is an intern at The National Journal.

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own their homes can rent to younger occupants who can provide them with money or exchange assistance around the house for rent. Conversely, fortysomething couples can move their parents in, saving the sizable cost of another house or the huge expense of a nursing home when it is not medically necessary.

"It's affordable housing that requires no subsidy, with below-market rates, and integrated into the neighborhood," says Patrick Hare, a Washington-based planner and author of *Accessory Apartments: The State of the Art*. In spite of the hostile reception that usually greets proposals to allow accessory units, renting out part of a house, according to Hare, is hardly a revolutionary idea: "You're not talking about a social experiment."

Try telling that to civic associations, the best-organized interest groups on matters of local housing, and consistently the most ardent opposition to accessory apartments. The problem generally is that these folks have a hard time distinguishing between a stable, young, home-owning couple looking to bring in some rental money and a band of crazed dealers selling crack.

Home grown

"The great attraction is how flexible they are," says Peter Calthorpe, a planner and architect who is building accessory apartments in the Laguna West development outside Sacramento. He has helped convince local jurisdictions to allow the units, after the government realized they are less disruptive than high-density apartment buildings. "It creates great diverse neighborhoods, and it adds enough density to support transit systems and local shops. If you work with small-lot, single-family homes, it avoids the condo landscape we seem to have fallen into. It tightens the feeling of neighborhood."

The neighborhood feel is precisely what attracted Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, the innovative architects who have been building neo-traditional communities—Georgetown-like row houses within walking distance of a town center—with accessory apartments. "It's a great source of affordable housing without grouping together lower-income housing in a single location," says Mike Watkins, town architect of a Duany/Plater-Zyberk community in Gaithersburg, Maryland. "There's less chance the tenant will pile up the garbage or play the radio loud when the landlord is living right there. It allows different types of people to live in the neighborhood—a single person, a young couple—people who wouldn't ordinarily be buying a five-bedroom house."

Which, of course, is precisely what scares the civic association crowd. To them, additional units are antithetical to the idea of suburban, detached housing, because they introduce comparative transients to the neighborhoods. Breaking up the homogeneity of the suburbs is a frightening prospect for suburbanites, and not just for xenophobic "there-goes-the-neighborhood" reasons; the mix of income levels and races brings the possibility of a decline in the value of houses in the neighborhood.

Even advocates like Patrick Hare understand this wariness. Changing zoning laws, he says, is "like the doctor saying, 'This won't hurt a bit'—it's not the doctor getting the shot. Most housing advocates don't understand this. People are not rational about shots or surgery."

But there is no evidence that granny flats reduce property values or cause neighborhoods to deteriorate. And there are signs indicating that home prices may even rise to reflect the opportunity for rental income. Certainly they are far less disruptive to a neighborhood's character than boarding houses, which are legal in many areas where accessory flats are not. Seattle, for instance, allows up to eight people to live under one roof, but inexplicably does not allow accessories.

So if accessory flats are such a good idea, why aren't there more of them? First, most people don't know they exist. There is no big money behind them. There is no American Association of Accessory Apartments to lobby for them, and no political pressure to demand them. There is no lobbying on the grass-roots level of zoning boards. The prime exception is the AARP, which has advocate volunteers pushing the idea in 32 states.

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You wouldn't guess it from the reaction they usually get, but these advocates are not trying to systematically break up neighborhood enclaves. They just want to level the playing field by removing zoning barriers that favor neighborhood zealots over the homeowners whose well-being can depend on renting out an accessory unit.

But rationality doesn't always sell, and in the absence of a proven and widely publicized model program, few policymakers will be willing to make the leap. "The difficulty is that there are no outstanding models in this country," says Leo Baldwin, a former AARP executive who is a consultant on senior housing. "You can point to Australia, England, France, and Sweden, but it's not here, so people think there's something wrong with it."

There *have* been attempts to spread the word in the U.S., but most have suffered from a lack of follow-through. A few years ago, Fannie Mae started offering special deals for accessory apartments, but there was little effort to advertise them to bankers or homeowners. In 1991, Montgomery County—which has become home to 425 accessory apartments for renters and 210 for relatives and hired help in the nine years since they were legalized—printed a snazzy booklet to encourage others to join in. But before it could be mailed out, a budget crunch hit; county officials feared that if they solicited more homeowners to build second units, they would never be able to pay for the staff to approve and inspect them.

California had a sensible idea: It made accessory units a statewide, not a local, mandate by passing a law in 1981–82. But it left a gaping loophole that allowed municipalities to restrict the circumstances under which they can be built. As a result, the approval process for a zoning variance can be harrowing. Municipalities may mandate standards so stringent—including extensive regulations that require expensive remodeling or extra parking spaces—that the cost is boosted far out of reach of most homeowners. One locality charges $3,500 simply to apply for a permit, and the fee is non-refundable even if the permit is never granted. The joke now is that California has more laws about accessory apartments than it has accessory apartments.

The good news is that the Department of Housing and Urban Development will soon begin operating two federal demonstration programs on accessory flats. One project offers counties and cities seed money to encourage homeowners to build the units. The other encourages non-profit organizations like charities and advocacy groups to own and operate accessory units across a region. The latter program might be particularly helpful if local groups—which are plugged into grass-roots social-service networks for seniors—possess enough goodwill in the community to overcome Not-In-My-Backyard sentiments.

Policymakers here can look to Canada for inspiration. Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal have all committed themselves to extensive accessory apartment policies. Like California, Ontario found that local zoning boards blocked construction, so the Ministry of Housing raised the ante and began stumping for a wide-ranging law which, if passed, will take effect this fall. Vancouver figured out a way to bypass the zoning boards; they put the issue to a referendum. In each neighborhood, every owner and tenant cast ballots on whether they wanted to see accessory apartments legalized. In the end, 47 percent of the neighborhoods decided they did.

If zoning boards and civic groups continue to stand in the way in this country, the inexorable pressures of demographics may soon mow them down. Americans over 65 now account for 13 percent of the U.S. population—they'll be 20% within four decades. And these seniors will live longer, which means they're more likely to have disabilities that make homes designed for younger people harder for them to navigate. Meanwhile, the price of buying a home gets more prohibitive by the year. Median prices have increased by 53 percent in 10 years, and the National Association of Realtors projects an additional 11 percent increase by 1995.

Deborah Lind, an interior designer in Woodland Hills, California, points out that many folks simply won't be able to afford not to build accessory units: "People are going to do what they need to do regardless of what the law says." If the past is any indication, chances are that measures to allow this housing solution won't get attention until we're out of other options. By then the choice will be either to legalize, even to encourage, accessory units, or to prepare to pack the jails with grannies. □

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Reading, Writing, and Ripoffs

The only ones helped by most teaching fads are those who market them

by Patricia Kean

When Phillip Composto was a teacher, he took a no-nonsense approach to resolving student disputes: Sit the combatants down, allow each to speak his piece, and then give equal time for a response. Later on, however, an education book taught Composto that he had actually stumbled onto a highly complex mediation technique called "The Magic Circle."

"That's what happens in education," says Composto, who is now a New York City junior high school principal. "It was just common sense, but somebody came along, formalized it, put a name to it, marketed it, and got money for it. People go for buzzwords."

Education fads are nothing new; schools are haunted by the ghosts of language labs and open classrooms past. But in these heady days of national school reform, the buzzwords are flying faster than ever, creating exciting, innovative ways to waste a great deal of money. Some ideas represent common sense bloated beyond recognition, while others spring directly from educational masterminds. But many have seen these concepts at least once or twice before: "Education is a wheel," Composto says, "It goes around and around, and we keep recycling."

It's enough to give classroom veterans a queasy feeling. During Sally Pratt's (a pseudonym, per her request) 15-year tenure as a high school language teacher, she's seen flashy school innovations come and go. "All fads create turmoil and chaos. They're terrible for morale," says Pratt, who teaches on Long Island. "It's gotten really bad over the last two years. They tell us, 'You must teach this way.' It's all coming from administrators who haven't been in a classroom for 20 years."

Patricia Kean is a New York writer.

It has only been a few years since I was in a classroom teaching high school English. But it wasn't until last fall, when I enrolled in state-required education courses, that I got hip to the latest crazes, everything from "authentic assessment" to the "teacher-facilitator."

While the victims of fashion recover quickly, school fads do lasting damage by siphoning off dollars that could make a difference. Reducing the number of students per class, recruiting teachers who know subject matter instead of education school palaver, dismantling the inherently unjust tracking system, and rebuilding the crumbling infrastructure of the nation's inner-city schools would be good places to begin. As it stands now, however, should you ask why schools where kids who have closets for classrooms also have video production studios on the premises, you're likely to get a lot of blank stares in return. It's simply easier for education bureaucrats to grab the latest quick fix and abandon it when the next sure thing comes along.

How do you separate the fads from the worthwhile ideas? First, look beyond the warm and fuzzy rhetoric that envelops most of them (one quick way is to count the number of times the word "empowerment" is used).

Next, check the price tag. Because fads typically exalt technique over content, they require a vast array of goods and services, turning schools into suckers for salesmen hawking some truly silly "educational" products. Finally, consider the claims made by supporters. Do they sound vaguely messianic? If advocates promise the moon and are backed by the latest in social science research, be afraid. Be very afraid.

Dr. Geoffrey Fletcher, Texas' associate commissioner for technology applications, says it's

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time for teachers to stop "doling out pearls of wisdom, expecting kids to dump it in their empty heads and vomit it out the mouth or the pen." That's because high techies fervently believe that machines, not men and women, will usher in education's brave new world.

In other words, technology will soon do the dumping for us, and the whole thing promises to be a lot less messy, though a bit more costly.

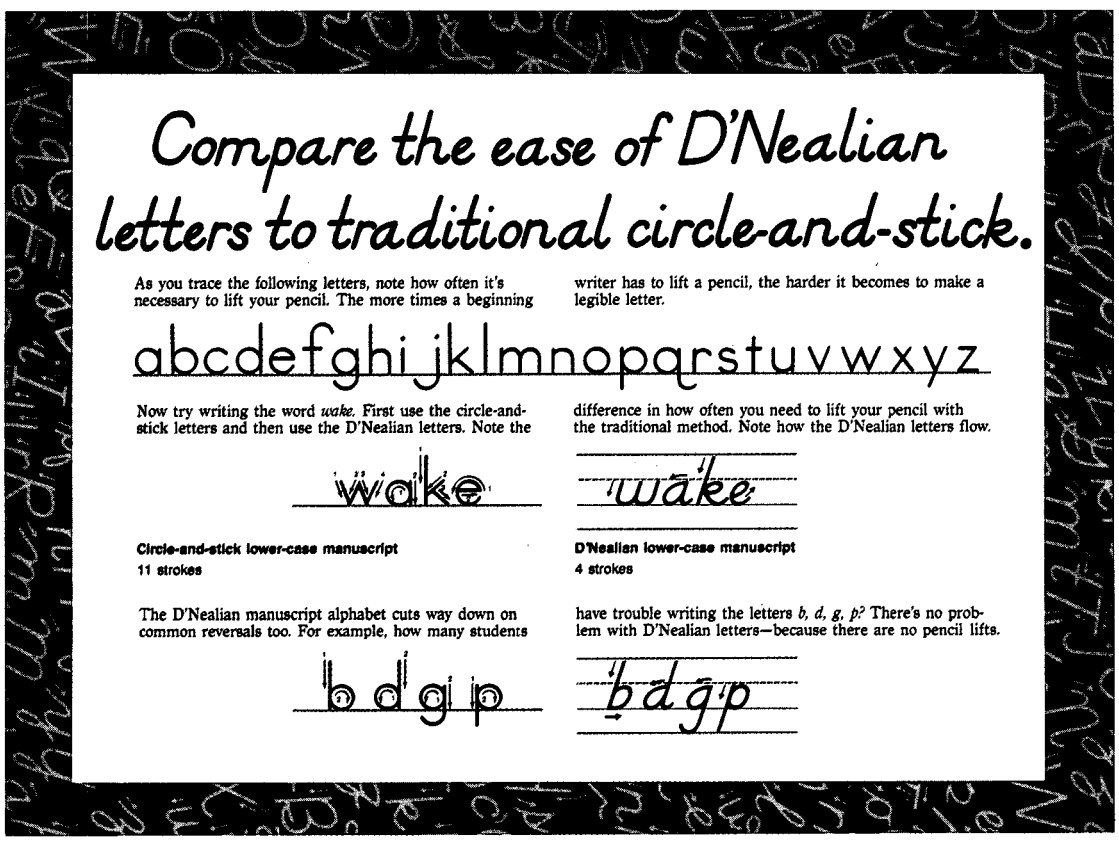
It's not as though we can save on teachers' salaries by replacing them altogether. Teachers will still have to be there, but they'll take on reduced roles as "facilitators" or "coaches." "Technology allows students access to any information in the world," Fletcher says. "It allows for the democratization of information."

So does the library, once you've mastered the intricacies of the Dewey Decimal system. But books are fading fast, possibly because they haven't yet figured out how to sell themselves as "interactive." *(You* turn the page!

New words appear!) In 1989, Texas made it official, by allowing its schools to broaden the definition of "textbook" to include such items as computer software and laser discs. Because Texas is one of the states that adopts "books" on a statewide basis, it helps set the agenda for publishers and thus for the rest of the country.

But since software requires hardware, Texas had to allocate additional funds for that purpose. Right now the technology allotment stands at $30 per child, set to increase $5 a year, until leveling off at $50 per student. "Some people say that $30 per child isn't very much," Fletcher says, "But if you multiply that by 3.3 million students, you're talking more than 100 million bucks. And that's a big chunk of change."

If you thought states breaking off such a chunk from shrinking school budgets would need hard, fast evidence that kids learn better when tethered to a machine, you're right. The research is out there, says Michael Eason, Flori-



Another grade school educator reinvents the wheel

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da's administrator for education technology, but much of it comes from parties that could be considered "interested"—like Apple Computer.

Not all technology is bad, but not all of it is necessary, either. Laser-disc players offer one example. According to Quality Education Data, a Denver research firm, the number of schools using them has doubled in the past two years. Florida spent $1.6 million to ensure that every school in the state had one.

But a Brooklyn-based producer who has worked on science laser-discs and who wished to remain anonymous questions their value. "It's typical of things that boards of education do," she says. "They think, 'This is the new thing, we're a good district if we have it.' But the ones I've seen are all flash and no substance." And Lisa Hersh, executive editor for education technology at Macmillan-McGraw Hill says, "We think that laser-disc technology is a fad that will pass." So her company is hard at work on the next generation of electronics, a multimedia language arts program, requiring still more gear—in this case a CD-ROM player—set to hit classrooms by 1994.

By contrast, the ABCs would seem to be a simple affair. Lesson one is easy: ABCs are out. Under the heading of "The Alphabet: To Teach or Not to Teach?" the January 1993 issue of *Pre-K Today* offers the following warning: "Worksheets encourage children to follow instructions passively rather than think creatively. That's why alphabet instruction isn't recommended."

But if you insist on teaching the alphabet, Donald Neal Thurber, a former grade-school teacher, has something for you. He devised a new alphabet, one "that respects individual differences"—and bears an uncanny resemblance to the old one. But there's a twist to the D'Nealian alphabet—a curlicue on the end of most letters that make them look something like a cross between print and script. This curvy alphabet not only reduces the headache children feel each time they must lift the pencil from the paper as they print, it also eases the rocky transition to cursive or script. Thurber patented his new alphabet, naming it after the letters of his own name.

The ScottForesman D'Nealian handwriting program, now in its third edition, offers plenty of help for those who must re-learn their ABCs. First off, there's a video: "A 20-minute tape to build teacher confidence in modeling D'Nealian letters by clearly demonstrating formation of D'Nealian alphabets." That costs $49.95. Then, for moms and dads who blithely assumed they could help their kids learn the alphabet, there's the "Parent Pack," containing explanatory letters and suggesting D'Nealian activities the whole family can enjoy, just $5.95.

Like our old friend the alphabet, traditional textbooks, with their rigid reliance on quaint notions like "chronology," have also fallen from grace. Instead, thematic learning that crosses disciplines, an approach championed by John Dewey and the progressives in the days of yore, is once again the rage. Let's face it—textbooks have their faults. Many are mind-numbingly dull; by trying too hard not to offend, they also fail to please. In the hands of bad teachers, they're every kid's nightmare. But textbooks also have their good points: They convey a great deal of factual information, and they proceed in a logical fashion. Best of all, there's one for every child. Consider the costs involved in replacing them. Educators already pressed by the demands of teaching upwards of 150 students a day now face the challenge of putting together a "framework" they can use to squeeze together subjects as diverse as literature and math. Feel-good themes like "family" and "tolerance" often result.

Buying ready-made themes is an option for harried teachers of younger children. The J.L. Hammett Company catalog offers theme units for kindergarten through third-grade classes "that reflect things kids and adults love . . . friends, hats, money, pasta, and shoes!" The "pasta" book features everyone's favorites—Rigatoni, Shell, and Penne—dressed, for reasons that are not immediately clear, in marching band costumes. And pasta literacy comes cheap—just $7.95, less than the price of an entree at your neighborhood restaurant.

No textbook—no test. It's as easy as that. Since critics charge that old-fashioned "pen and paper" tests measure only lower-level thinking skills, it follows that new thematic teaching requires a grading revolution.

Tests must now emphasize "authenticity"—what students can "do," instead of merely what they "know." A popular form of "authentic assessment" is the portfolio, a collection of work students choose to represent their best efforts

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over the course of a semester, or even of a year. A bad idea? Not really.

But by the time it gets through the educational bureaucracy, portfolio assessment becomes not an art but a very expensive science. Dr. Edward Reidy, associate commissioner for curriculum assessment and accountability for Kentucky, which included authentic assessment in its 1990 education reform bill, says his state's program is "standards-driven." For example, "There are four levels of writing—novice, apprentice, proficient, and distinguished. We can describe the levels and illustrate them with samples," Reidy says.

In order to be certain that all teachers can separate the novice from the apprentice, Kentucky has undertaken a massive teacher re-education program that Reidy says includes workshops, videos, self-study guides, and released time, a.k.a. hours away from school. His best estimate is that the process will take several more years. But all the training in the world couldn't have prepared me for my first brush with authentic assessment. After splitting the education class in "teams," my instructor at Hunter College gave each group a "learning objective." The assignment: Find a way to assess the objectives authentically. Easy enough until we opened ours and read "students will understand and practice safe sex." Our professor's suggestion was as authentic as Times Square: Pair off students with their usual sex partner and listen in on some x-rated pillow talk.

Schools have also accepted the reality that a student's beliefs about his own abilities have a dramatic effect on learning, and that many kids face crises that spill over into the classroom. But is an 87-lesson crash course on self-esteem the answer?

If so, Constance Dembrowsky's Institute for Affective Skill Development curriculum package is a steal at $299. So too are her six audiocassettes, "Self Esteem in the Classroom: The Experts Speak," ($59.95) and "Wind Trails," a collection of quotes Ms. Dembrowsky uses in speeches and seminars. But at $995, the reproducible Student and Parent Activity package seems a bit steep—until one learns that schools can use federal drug abuse education dollars to subsidize programs like these.

"The Rainbow Curriculum," New York City's attempt to drill respect for all cultures—including gay and lesbian—into its schoolchildren, backfired loudly last year. Hate crimes rose, the religious right began running candidates for local school boards, and Joseph Fernandez, a school Chancellor as brash as the city itself, got the heave-ho.

Teachers seeking to incorporate different cultures into the curriculum already have the finest resource available: the kids themselves. If boards of education want experts representing Hispanic, Asian, African-American, or Irish culture, they need look no further than the fourth row. If teachers encourage respect for differences by their own actions and by the way they run their classrooms, real lessons can be learned.

Institutionalizing tolerance, on the other hand, can be costly. Consider Crayola's multicultural products intended for the classroom. Why did this line of paint, crayons, and markers that run the skin-tone gamut come into being? "It's not that we're trying to be politically correct," says Mark O'Brien, Crayola's media communications specialist. "It's that we're listening to consumers—the teachers and the general public." Right. It couldn't be the kids who were clamoring for "burnt sienna" and "sepia." One of the great joys of running with the sevensomething set is the freedom from the literal thinking that affects grown-ups. Everyone knows that skin can be red, pink, even green. Barney is purple, for pete's sake. It's called "using your imagination," and it's a lot cheaper than buying two sets of crayons.

Improving schools won't be easy, and it certainly won't be cheap. But instead of throwing money away on fads, educators should invest in common sense—a much maligned lower-level thinking skill currently out of vogue among reformers. Want kids with high self-esteem? Smaller classes would allow teachers to treat their students as individuals, not as standardized test scores. Want to show children their education is important? Start by fixing up the dilapidated buildings which send the opposite message loud and clear. Want kids to respect differences? Stop segregating them into separate school tracks. Who knows? If schools wise up, they could start a trend. □

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"More Champagne, Ms. Mitchell?"

The other side of the Travelgate story and why the media didn't tell you about it

by Dan Cogan

The close reader could sight the traces of a guilty conscience. At the height of the controversy over President Clinton's dismissal of White House travel office staffers, White House correspondent Michael Frisby wrote in *The Wall Street Journal* that "Billy Dale, the travel office director, and his troops have frequently been called the 'best friends reporters have on the road.' " Trying to account for the uproar over the firings, *Time* magazine's Margaret Carlson revealed that the "White House failed to take into account that the travel office had a powerful protector in the press, which has long been pampered by the plush level of accommodations." Beyond these discrete admissions, readers had little to go on. Frisby briefly mentioned stories of reporters smuggling expensive foreign rugs past U.S. Customs as Billy Dale graciously looked the other way; Carlson offered a few digs about family members tagging along for a flat $100 rate, and favorite drinks being provided without reporters having to ask. But after a full week's coverage of what the press grandiosely dubbed "Travelgate," their own appetites, dalliances, and secrets were firmly under cover.

Was it a collective oversight that the vast majority of news accounts didn't tell readers what the travel office actually *did*? Or were reporters simply wary of letting on that they had reason to miss the folks being given the heave-ho?

"The travel office had nothing to do but feed and care for the press in the most lavish way possible," said one correspondent who joined the press corps last year and who requested anonymity. "The travel is first class plus. One trip to Kennebunkport, I got on the plane, and there was lobster, roast beef, and really good wines whenever you wanted it. Money was no object."

Dan Cogan is a reporter at the New York Observer.

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Travelling reporters drop their baggage at the curb of Andrews Air Force Base, and it reappears upon arrival in their first-class hotel suites. Expensive overseas purchases are brought home without paying shipping costs or custom duties, since all baggage is quickly whisked past customs agents. Laundering and dry cleaning are taken care of. Like flights and hotel rooms, ground transportation is always pre-arranged.

And what about the job itself? Since 50 to 100 members of the corps follow the commander-in-chief on domestic trips—too many to be around him constantly—a "pool" of three or four reporters from different media stays at the president's side and acts as the eyes and ears for the rest. This means that the large majority of correspondents, who have just flown thousands of miles at great expense, generally retire to the filing center to watch the president on closed-circuit television. "It's actually possible to travel overseas with a president and never see him," says *Newsweek*'s Tom DeFrank.

It's also possible to bolt the traveling circus altogether. With nothing much to do when they weren't in the pool for Clinton's recent dinner in Chicago with House Ways and Means Chairman Dan Rostenkowski, nearly two dozen reporters took off to see the Cubs play at Wrigley Field. In the third year of the Bush administration, a few regulars even created a prize—the Poppy—for the correspondent who wasted the most time following the president. Dan Goodgame, who covered President Bush for *Time* magazine, says when he lectures at journalism schools, his standard line is, "If you want to be lazy, the White House is the best beat in the world.'

Time out

What justifies a huge retinue of pampered reporters trailing the president? Surely not great reporting. "When you get high stakes commercial competition, especially in television, but also in print, the large numbers mean that they compete for something every minute," says media critic Ben Bagdikian, who is also a former managing editor at *The Washington Post*. "That has increased enormously the amount of trivia and glitches made to look important. Even glitches are sometimes hard to spot within the traveling pack. The now infamous $200 haircut was actually uncovered by *Washington Post* gossip columnist Lois Romano. The press corps' plane took off before Cristophe climbed aboard Air Force One. And being glued to the president's schedule often leads to missing the political action that precedes a visit and the reactions that follow. *The New York Post*'s Deborah Orin said she "did a better job covering [Clinton's recent] New York trip on the ground than aboard the press charter" because she was able to talk to local politicians before he arrived and then listen to him on a local radio show.

Still, keeping a troupe of reporters trained on the president does have some justifications. One is in the event that the president gets shot. Reporters also say that trips are essential for cultivating presidential aides as sources, and even allow them to do some in-depth reporting. Goodgame recalled that when he was in Kennebunkport during the summers, he would "go by the hotels where the president's advisers were staying, go hit golf balls with them at the driving range, have top advisers over to dinner. I spent a terrific couple of hours with Sununu out on the deck of his hotel room and learned more about their budget strategy than in a dozen phone calls in Washington."

Clinton hadn't apparently figured out any of this. He briefly banned journalists from their old quarters in the West Wing and the $100 travel rate for family members has been discontinued. So it should come as little surprise that the press has been so prickly. Clinton could learn a lesson or two from men like Richard Darman and James Baker, who were brilliant at feeding reporters enough to make them want to come back for more and therefore unlikely to file anything unflatterring about them.

But the White House beat has perils that go beyond being used by a cabinet member. There is the risk that all the pampering will fundamentally alter a perspective. Journalists, once considered outsiders, now feel more a part of the Washington inner circle. "Everyone in the Washington press corps tends to be pretty well paid," says David Lauter of the *Los Angeles Times*. "We tend to live in comfortable suburbs, and a lot of us send our kids to private schools." Which helps explain what you heard—and what you didn't hear—about Travelgate. □

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WHO'S WHO

Newcomers to Washington don't relish the trip to D.C.'s infamously torpid Department of Motor Vehicles to register their cars (as is required by law), but it seems that many of **Clinton**'s top people have passed on the experience altogether. According to DMV's records, car-drivers **Thomas McLarty**, **Ira Magaziner**, **Hazel O'Leary**, **Donna Shalala**, **Mickey Kantor**, **George Stephanopolous** and others are not on the district's rolls. Recently demoted political director **Rahm Emanuel** hasn't registered either, though given his precipitous fall from grace, his home state plates may soon suffice. . . .

The Republicans who were so indignant about **Bill Clinton**'s Hairport may have a hair scandal of their own. It seems that **Robert Dole**, a.k.a. the Bobster or the Dark Prince of Gridlock, may owe his dark hair to the skills of a beautician. The Senate barbershop is the old-fashioned kind with seven chairs, except for one feature: It has a backroom where transforming rites are said to occur and from which the senior Senator from Kansas is reported to periodically emerge looking considerably younger than his 70 years. . . .

Maybe **Hillary Clinton** ought to throw more things at the president. Almost everyone who knows the two of them well says she has the discipline he lacks. **Bill Clinton** could also take lessons from her on how to choose and organize a staff. Insiders tell us that Hillary's, led by **Maggie Williams** and **Melanne Verveer**, is considerably more efficient than his. . . .

Assuming, however, no Hillarian coup, hope for improvement in the president's staff now rides on **Harold Ickes**, whose New York friends assure us possesses the decisiveness that has not been one of the West Wing's more conspicuous virtues. . . .

A reliable source predicts that one of **David Gergen**'s first moves will be to add a speechwriter to the White House staff. With people like **Ickes**, Gergen, and the speechwriter being added and no one leaving, the administration is having a tough time holding to its pledge to cut the White House staff. This we are told may have been another reason for firing the White House travel office. If the travel work had been contracted out as the Clintonites planned, then seven slots would have been open for new hires like Ickes and Gergen. . . .

Key White House gatekeepers, the people to see if you want to see their bosses, are **Heather Beckel** for **George Stephanopoulos**, **Diane Pierce** for **David Gergen**, and **Bill Burton** for **Thomas McLarty**. . . .

Brit Hume, who, after **Ruth Bader Ginsburg**'s moving remarks in the Rose Garden, asked **Bill Clinton** the question that made the president lose his temper, was not known for directing similar queries toward his friend and tennis partner, **George Bush**. In fact, back then he had become, as Who's Who reported in December 1991, "the object of ridicule by the press because of his obvious sympathy for [Bush]." (Hume, by the way, merits "Star of the Issue" honors for this edition of the *Monthly*. See Tilting at Windmills and "Bad News Bearers.") . . .

The opponent **Clinton** is said to fear the most is General **Colin Powell**. Powell is developing into a powerful speaker. He also does not like, according to one friend, "Clinton's tendency to publicly think out loud before finalizing what he thinks he's going to do. Every word Powell says in public is well considered, and he thinks that should be the same with a president, especially if it involves a potential use of force." . . .

Speaking of the president's potential opponents, one within his own party that we hear **Clinton** is making herculean efforts to mollify is **Sam Nunn**. Nunn recently told a friend that Clinton had called him and talked for more than 90 minutes. At the one hour point, a weary Nunn said "Mr. President, I'm sure you have more important things to do than talk to me" to which Clinton replied "Oh no, no" and continued to talk for another half hour. . . .

Vernon Jordan's compensation from directorships totaled $686,000 in 1991 according to the Crystal Report, which analyzes corporate pay and perks. If Jordan had attended all the meetings he was supposed to attend in order to earn his fees, he would have gone to 79 regular board meetings and 95 committee meetings. . . .

Even though everyone here knew that the **Reagan-Bush** years were not characterized by regulatory zeal, few were prepared for the report in *The New York Times* that Bush's top coal mining regulator, **Harry M. Snyder**, is being investigated for allegedly having blocked enforcement of the strip mining law, helping coal mine operators avoid prosecution, and reducing fines. . . .

"Is this what it was like then?" asked a White House staff member when he recently sat down to lunch with a friend who had served in **Jimmy Carter**'s administration. "Yes," replied the friend, "but after three years, not three months." . . .

—*Susan Threadgill*

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Myth Information

How an unwitting press gets policy wrong

by Jon Meacham

It was the first Sunday in June, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan was on a roll. Buoyant and sporting a red bow tie, the New York senator played the avuncular elder statesman on ABC's "This Week With David Brinkley," discoursing on politics and philosophy with Sam Donaldson and George Will. Near the end of the interview, Moynihan was asked where Senate Democrats, who were taking up the budget in the coming week, might find "more spending reductions."

Pulling a sheet of paper from his suit pocket, Moynihan suggested that $35 billion could come out of Medicare. The remark kicked off a week of ominous news reports. On the CBS "Evening News," correspondent Eric Enberg intoned, ". . . [T]he administration is looking at the part of the budget that includes Medicare and Social Security" while running a video clip of a nurse lifting an elderly man in a polka-dotted hospital gown from a wheelchair.

Later in the week, CNN used footage of a patient on his way to surgery to illustrate this point: "To make up the shortfall in the energy tax, the President may be forced to go ahead with proposals to increase spending cuts by another $50 billion, some $35 billion of which would come from Medicare."

The elderly con was on. "Senior citizens, who vote more in larger numbers than any other segment of the population, will not forget, nor will they forgive you," the Council of Senior Citizens' Larry Smedley warned on ABC. But there are a hundred other questions involved: Do the rich pay enough? Why aren't costs controlled, anyway? Is slowing Medicare down good policy?

The truth is that Moynihan was talking about possibly slowing the *growth* of Medicare over the next five years. Medicare will

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cost $170 billion in 1994, and, even if the Senate had enacted the $35 billion figure, Medicare would have hit $235 billion by 1998 instead of $262 billion. So while the Senate considered the five-year budget plan, much of the media failed to explain what the dramatic talk about Medicare would mean for the people on Medicare.

As it happened, the Senate decided $10 billion would be enough. The savings would come from reducing how much the government pays doctors and hospitals for Medicare patients—nothing would actually be taken away from the feeble old people on television.

That's because providers routinely shift costs not covered by Medicare to privately insured patients. Until after the Senate vote, no major story that dealt with Medicare and the budget explained that, or the fact that Moynihan had (unwisely) ruled out raising premiums on the well-off.

To do pieces like that requires a level of sophistication about government that many reporters simply don't have. For most run-of-the-mill journalists, taxes, spending, and the bureaucracy form a huge blind spot, and that blindness has important consequences: Half-baked reporting becomes conventional wisdom, which in turn affects major policy decisions. Imagine a senior citizen watching the news: *A Medicare cut! Jesus, they're beating up on the elderly! I'm calling my congressman!* Those calls are made all the time, and the result is a Congress that carries water for very particular groups of constituents.

To get what they want, people with a special stake in how the government spends money—seniors and bureaucrats in particular—can gull the media into shilling a party line, especially when the issue is complicated or obscure. After all, reporters think the romance in journalism is in horsetrading politics, not in government, and they tend to suspend their disbelief when it comes to the details of policy.

Here are three other cons the media habitually fall for when they cover the federal establishment—a world where cuts aren't cuts, statistics can be cooked, and interested parties can fool reporters who don't have a feel for the inside game.

➤Federal employees make 30 percent less than they would at comparable jobs in the private sector.

This factoid is like the October Surprise: enduring yet wrong. A familiar statistic when bureaucratic salaries come up for review, it has worked its way into the culture since 1969, when salaries were supposed to be tied to what a federal worker could bring down in the private sector. After Clinton targeted the 2 million-strong federal workforce in February for a freeze on new raises, the employees' unions and members of Congress from bureaucrat-rich areas like Virginia and Maryland began playing the pay gap con.

On March 11, after a House Post Office and Civil Service subcommittee hearing, *The Washington Post* reported, "Rep. Leslie L. Byrne (D-Va.) pointed out that federal wages lag about 29 percent behind comparable private sector pay. 'It's awfully hard to shine when the world is wearing you down,' she told [Alice] Rivlin." States News Service, in its wire copy to subscriber papers, routinely repeats the figure. And on the April 26 edition of ABC's "World News Tonight," correspondent John Martin used the statistic in an otherwise tough report on federal pensioners: "Federal workers say they deserve the [retirement] COLA [cost of living adjustment] because government salaries are 20 to 30 percent below private industry."

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One problem: The statistic is bogus. Where does it come from? The federal government, with its $107 billion payroll, is the nation's largest single employer. To set those salaries, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) conducts a national survey in which private sector personnel managers read federal job descriptions and say what a comparable job with them would pay. The results of these surveys yield the 29 percent average gap. That gap is being used to justify healthy pay raises—about $1.8 billion worth—for federal employees across the country in the next few years.

So what's wrong with that? "The chief suspect in all of this is that federal job descriptions are inflated," says Alan Krueger, a Princeton University economist who studies government wages. That means bureaucrats are being paid for work it only sounds as if they're doing. With minimal literary flair, for example, fairly routine responsibilities can begin to sound a lot like Julius Caesar's. Consider these excerpts from the description of a GS-12 (a basically low level) engineer: " . . . requires the use of advanced techniques and the modification and extension of theories, precepts, and practices of the field and related sciences and disciplines . . . carries out complex or novel assignments requiring the development of new or improvised techniques and procedures . . . work is expected to result in the development of new or refined equipment, materials, processes, products, and/or scientific methods."

How many private engineers are performing at such levels or higher? In Boston, 16 percent; in Atlanta, 27 percent. But according to the government, *91 percent* of federal engineers are engaged in such groundbreaking, Galilean research. (Not incidentally, it's the feds who write the descriptions.)

The Office of Management and Budget has challenged the pay survey's accuracy, and at least one analysis of federal-versus-private wages from 1948 to 1990 by Krueger and Lawrence Katz of Harvard (Katz is now the chief economist of the Department of Labor) found average pay actually *higher* for federal workers. The average fed makes $36,279 ($45,000 in Washington); 30 percent of government employees make over $40,000 just in salary, which can go as high as $85,000. (Some top bureaucrats hit six figures-plus in wages alone.) Meanwhile, the average private sector worker makes $26,758, and only 10 percent make salaries in the government's top range.

Let's pretend, though, that federal employees are getting the financial shaft. (Leave aside the fact that, in 1992, the federal quit rate was about 6 percent, and there's no shortage of applicants for jobs.) Simple market economics tells us there's got to be *some* reason people want to work for the government. And that reason must be . . . the benefits.

Job security—it's virtually impossible to fire a federal employee—is one huge advantage. And civil servants, for instance, can retire at age 55 after 30 years on the job with generous pensions tied to the Consumer Price Index. According to the Hay Group, a compensation consulting firm, federal employees making from $20,000 up to $125,000 receive total benefits ranging in value from $12,000 at the bottom end to $55,000 at the top, besting corporate America by about $2,500 at each step. The holiday time alone is lavish and can be cleverly cloaked. Where private sector workers generally get two weeks of paid vacation a year, the most junior federal employees get what the government refers to as "13 days." Sounds fair enough—until you realize that it means 13 *work* days, which is, counting weekends, two-and-a-half weeks. As a fed rises in seniority, he gets 20 days—in effect, four weeks. And don't forget the 13 available days of sick leave, the 10 federal holidays, and the comp time.

Even those feds who argue that there was a genuine pay gap when they came on the job in the sixties—and for some jobs that was true then and is true now—are retiring well. And in the intervening years, annual COLAs on the order of 9 percent in 1980 to 4 percent in recent years still outstripped private raises. Nevertheless, the gap myth endures. Why? Mainly because of the reportorial tendency to depend on authoritative voices instead of asking independent questions. It's easier to quote a spokesman with a statistic than to dig around to see if it has the virtue of being true.

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➤***Government employees are unfairly limited in their political rights by the Hatch Act.***

Hatch Act reform is not exactly up there with middle-class tax relief or abortion as a hot-button, focus-group kind of issue, but it has enormous implications for how Washington—and the rest of the federal establishment—works. Since 1939, the Hatch Act has barred federal employees from active electioneering. They can still contribute money to campaigns and sport yard signs or bumperstickers. But a Hatched employee—there are about 3 million—can't be more involved than that in campaigns.

Congress is about to send Clinton a bill, which he says he supports, to weaken the Hatch Act. (Bush and Ford both vetoed similar measures.) On the day Senator John Glenn's Government Operations committee passed its version of Hatch Act reform in May (it had already quietly passed the House), a Gannett wire service report said this, relying heavily on a Glenn press release:

> A federal employee can give a candidate up to $1,000 per election, but can't volunteer to stuff envelopes or answer telephones at that candidate's headquarters.
>
> The employee can put a political poster in his or her yard or car, but can't wave it at a political rally. The worker can express political opinions, but can't give a speech even in a party caucus.
>
> For those reasons and others, a bipartisan group of House members and senators want to overhaul the 1938 Hatch Act, which restricts political activity by federal workers.

By emphasizing the little-old-lady-in-tennis-shoes aspect of campaign work, the reporter has accepted Glenn's con that Hatch is only about benign volunteer work. Heck, you might think, why not let the GS-11 go down to Senator X's headquarters if he wants to? Note, though, what is allowed now: essentially *passive* activity—the giving of money, the display of a sign, and obvious free speech guarantees. While the Gannett reporter does note that Senator William Roth, a Republican, opposes the repeal on the ground that it "will lead to a politicization of federal employees," that objection is quickly passed over.

In covering the bill's progress, it's become routine *not* to explore its potential impact; States News Service, for instance, took the Gannett route and stenographically reported the story. *The New York Times* has drily recorded the bill's progress; none of the networks has covered the repeal; and only a handful of editorials, such as *The Atlanta Constitution*'s "Hatch Act Changes Mean Return of the Spoils System," has raised the alarm over introducing overt partisanship into the civil service.

Down the Hatch

Of course, political patronage is not a bad thing. If a civil servant wants to be political, then he ought to be political and tie his job fortunes to the party in power. That way, if the voters hate the level of service they're getting, they can vote out not only their lawmaker or president but the employees who have helped contribute to the dissatisfaction. This magazine, for example, has long advocated just such a system to keep government accountable and encourage short-term stays in public service. Leaving, say, about half the work force as nonpolitical employees would ensure enough continuity between one administration and another.

But a repeal of the act, instead of moving toward that sensible solution, would make things even worse than they are now. Federal employees are asking for—and are very close to getting—the best of both worlds. They want the advantage of politics, the right to campaign for a candidate who will be favorably disposed to pay raises, COLAs, generous pensions, and all the rest.

But while civil servants want to be able to elect such politicians, they are unwilling to go the whole distance and put themselves on the line by giving up their tenure-protected jobs if their party loses. No major report, however, has noted this inconsistency or the price to the public of emasculating the Hatch Act without simultaneously doing away with federal sinecures. The press, when it's bothered to

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pay attention, has blithely ignored that and lazily overlooked the real effects on the bureaucracy.

Think of it this way: There are federal employees in every congressional district in the country. That's a massive political army ready to march. A congressman or a senator or a president elected with a network of organized civil service support is going to have debts to pay off—and you can bet those debts won't get paid on the backs of the civil service by cutting salaries or streamlining regulation. This is a big issue, worth billions in federal benefits, but unless Cristophe gets involved somehow, it's probably not going to be covered.

➤Taxing Social Security benefits is like jamming a broomstick in retirees' wheelchair spokes.

The day after Clinton's economic package passed the House in May, CNN's "Early Prime" news show went to Florida, the Arcadia of American retirees, to assess how senior citizens felt about changes in Social Security taxation. From the Washington anchor desk, Lou Waters set the scene: "President Clinton's economic plan would hit many older Americans who receive Social Security benefits with their own special tax," he said. "Now that tax is supposed to target recipients who don't depend on Social Security in order to live . . . [But] some older Americans don't think they should have to pay more for benefits they earned long ago."

"Here's how the proposed tax hike would work," the report said. "Add other income, plus half your Social Security benefits. If your total exceeds $25,000 a year for individuals or $32,000 for couples, you'd be subject to a new tax rate of 85 percent." If that were on the mark, then older folks could be excused for taking an extra dose of Geritol to calm down. But it's way off the mark. The reporter meant to say that 85 percent of benefits would be subject to the regular income tax rate you pay on your other income—nobody's going to be paying an 85 percent tax *rate*.

That means people near the cutoff probably will be paying a 15, 28, or 31 percent rate; the better-off elderly will pay a 36 percent rate if their combined income is over $200,000 on up to 40 percent at the highest levels. The increase is expected to bring in $32 billion over five years, but the cost to the 60 percent of Social Security recipients who make less than $25,000 a year is zero. In the $25,000 to $30,000 range, it's $42 a year.

Old gold

According to Congressional Budget Office data analyzed by Phillip Longman and Neil Howe for *The Atlantic* in 1992, a quarter of all entitlements—$200 billion—went to households with incomes over $50,000 in 1991. Social Security, Medicare, and federal pension benefits to households making over $200,000 fully doubled from 1980 to 1991. Meanwhile, households with incomes less than $10,000 lost 7 percent of their federal benefits.

In this context, the case for tying benefits and benefit taxation to income levels is clear. Today, more than 60 percent of all federal benefit spending flows to the 12 percent of Americans who are 65 or older. In 1990, for example, every American over 65 collected an average of $11,400 in federal benefits—tax-sheltered Social Security and Medicare among them, while 3.7 million senior citizens lived below the poverty line. Thirty-seven percent of America's retirees manage to slip from their cold-water flats and tuna fish diets to go on overseas vacations every year, while 40 percent are too poor to owe any income tax. The upshot is that while June and Ward Cleaver are doing well in retirement, the truly needy are out of luck.

Entitlement spending is complicated, but this is an issue where the media's learning curve has been enormous. Ten years ago, respectable opinion held that Social Security was rightly beyond the political pale; now, most reporters understand that there are some economic distinctions among the elderly. Still, there's a temptation, because Social Security affects old people, to overdramatize with widows-and-orphans stories instead of pointing out the inequities in the system.

On the weekend after the House voted on Clinton's budget, *The Washington Post* weighed in with a front-page Sunday story: "Capital's Caps May Be Heartland's Cuts;

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Millions on Fixed Incomes Watch Deficit Fight—and Their Budgets." Datelined from Streator, Illinois, a "quintessentially Heartland America community of 15,000," the piece plays on readers' emotions by highlighting the plight of two 80-year-old widows. For good measure, one of them is legally blind and just had shoulder replacement surgery. Yet even the worst possibility—that Senator David Boren's plan might limit Social Security COLAs—didn't apply to the $600-a-month widow the *Post* story describes. (The paper clarified that three days later.)

But the people who are going to be taxed by the new plan don't make very good copy: They're silver-haired Rotarians and cruise ship aficionados, not the at-risk elderly. It's easier to find a widow who, understandably confused by the Washington give-and-take, will say this of an ill-defined "entitlement cap": "I think it means that if everything keeps going up the way it is, I won't be able to afford to live."

The people who *are* going to be paying taxes on a higher rate of Social Security benefits don't make very good copy: They're silver-haired Rotarians and cruise ship aficionados.

While reducing COLAs for people at the bottom of the ladder is unfair, means testing is not, especially considering what the middle class is getting from the government. Another generic con is that beneficiaries are only "getting back what they paid in." Social Security pensioners are getting twice to 10 times as much back as they would if their Social Security contributions, plus interest, had been invested otherwise. At this point in the national debate over government spending, reporters who rely on interest group spokesmen or the grizzled poor are helping turn the inviolability of entitlements into a self-fulfilling prophecy. And that makes even modest changes more difficult than they need to be.

Dear federal diary

Can you fool all of the press all of the time? Not often, except in spectacular cases like the savings and loan collapse or the Reagan HUD scandals. Of course, there is a large technical press that caters to specific audiences. But most Americans don't pore over the pages of *Governing* magazine or even the mainstream financial press. They watch the news or scan newspapers.

"There's no question that we're not serious about covering government," says Hodding Carter, a journalist and a former Carter State Department official. "To put something across clearly and simply and correctly, you've first got to understand it yourself—and understand it well." Yet things are not uniformly bleak. For example, the Federal Page in the *Post* is much improved over its past incarnations, and Mike Causey's "Federal Diary," read with a knowing eye, is generally on the mark about the civil service. ABC is poking around the bureaucracy more, especially on government waste. These are good signs.

Overall, press gullibility is not inevitable. Richard Harwood has called journalism "the last refuge of the vaguely talented," and as a member of that vaguely talented craft myself, I know that boneheaded things get through from time to time. Instead of accepting that reporters are congenitally given to boneheadedness, though, why not think of a way to break out of it and turn the cons around on lobbyists and bureaucrats? Problems of sophistication don't come up when somebody who understands bureaucratic culture from first-hand experience is writing about it. William Safire is one example of a journalist who spent time in government and who has lived to tell about it with great wisdom.

But the Safires of the world are few and far between. The alternative is hard work from the outside. "If a reporter isn't calling on his set of agencies pretty much every day and staying on top of them," says Gene Roberts, the former editor of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, "it means that whatever stories do come along are going to be done on a crash-diet basis, and that's almost always unsatisfactory." □

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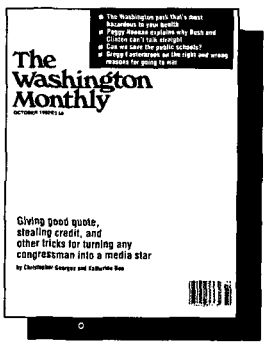
Inside Washington:

Georges, Christopher and Boo, Katherine. "Capitol Hill 20510," October 1992.
Giving good quote, stealing credit, and other tricks for turning any congressman into a media darling.



Peters, Charles. "How Washington Really Works," January/February 1993.
The simple equation that explains life in the Capital.

Segal, David. "Lemon Laws," January/February 1993.
Five stupid statutes and how we got them.

Meacham, Jon. "Hill Climbers," June 1993.
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On Health Care:

Watzman, Nancy. "Socialized Medicine Now—Without the Wait," October 1991.
So what if the Canadian health care system isn't perfect? Let's fix it—and bring it home.

Dolan, Michael. "Cardiologists' Arrest," December 1992.
We won't lower health care costs until med schools stop turning out so many specialists.

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In the debris of a failed bill, some pivotal pointers for making national health care happen.

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The not very reassuring past of Ira Magaziner, the brains behind the Health Care Task Force.

On Education:

Shuger, Scott. "The Academic Side-step," April 1990.
Academic freedom is supposed to foster debate. So why do college presidents use it to avoid tough issues?

Boo, Katherine. "Beyond Beauty Schools," March 1991.
There are lots of things the government should train the poor to do. Sculpting nails isn't one of them.

Townsend, Kathleen Kennedy. "Why Johnny Can't Tell Right From Wrong," December 1992.
The most important lesson our schools don't teach.

Kean, Patricia. "Blowing up the Tracks," January/February 1993.
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Schorr, Jonathan. "Class Action," June 1993.
What Clinton's national service program could learn from Teach for America.

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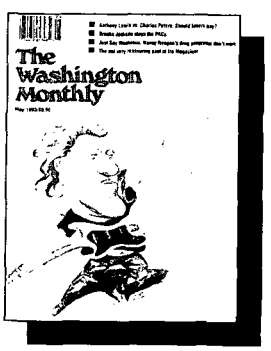
Georges, Christopher. "Confessions of an Investigative Reporter," March 1992.
Why "PrimeTime," "60 Minutes," The New York Times—and I—keep missing the big ones.

Boo, Katherine. "The New Writers' Bloc," November 1992.
Their aim is true when it comes to capturing character. But why shouldn't Maureen Dowd and her imitators shoot for substance, too?



Georges, Christopher. "Mock the Vote," May 1993.
What's wrong with MTV's hot new political coverage.

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TIDBITS & OUTRAGES

"REMEMBER THE PART WHERE MICKEY WEARS MINNIE'S EVENING GOWN AND HIGH HEELS? WELL, MR. HOOVER JUST DOESN'T THINK THAT'S FUNNY."
A new book, *Walt Disney: Hollywood's Dark Prince* by Marc Eliot, reveals that Disney, in return for being granted permission by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to film inside FBI headquarters, allowed J. Edgar Hoover to make some changes in Disney movie scripts and in an episode of "The Mickey Mouse Club."

"I WAS ASKING ON BEHALF OF THE LITTLE PEOPLE."
The San Diego *Union Tribune* revealed that the businessman who asked President Clinton at a local "town hall" meeting what had happened to the middle-class tax cut and who said that Californians could not afford new taxes had been delinquent on or had not paid his federal income taxes for eight years.

"AND HE'S HIRING COMMANDOS TO FIND ALL OUR MISSING SOCKS."
A woman recently wrote to Ann Landers complaining that since the last presidential campaign her husband has become such a devotee of Ross Perot that he won't lend tools to neighbors unless they put up collateral, and in all discussions of the household budget, he uses pie charts and bar graphs.

AND OSHA IS LOOKING INTO THAT HIT- BY- PITCH THING
The FCC fined a Norfolk, Virginia, minor league baseball team $8,000 for using an unlicensed radar gun to clock the speed of pitches.

FOR SALE: IVORY TOWER, 4 RMS, TNS CRT, PL, GRT VU
The University of California at Los Angeles responded to complaints from faculty about the scarcity of affordable housing by creating a housing project at the Santa Monica marina in which the homes sell for between $438,000 and $659,000. When no homes in the development were sold, the university made them available to its administrators.

—Scott Shuger

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Bad News Bearers

The media really were mugging Bill Clinton. Here's the proof

by Christopher Georges

Back in the Democrats' glory days (before they were elected), the Clinton image warriors figured out how to win the message crusade. Swallowing their pride—or what was left of it—the Democrats brilliantly plagiarized from the Reagan-Deaver-Gergen-Ailes gospel of media maintenance: a line of the day, a coordinated theme, populist images. And to their own surprise, it worked.

So when the new team of eager-Deavers took over America in January, it only made sense to stay on the same page. After all, if Reagan could pull the wheelchairs out from under the elderly and still, thanks to gushy photo ops and a pliant press, appear as the old folks' champion, smooth-talking Clinton—with the right communications plan—should also be able to have his way. Certainly the parallels between the Clinton and Reagan media strategies have limits, but the Carvillites made no secret of the fact they wanted to keep up the Deaver magic. That meant limiting national media access to the Boss; frowning on presidential news conferences (Reagan had only 21 in his first three years); giving preference to local media markets; catchy visuals; sell, sell, sell; and so on.

Given all that, why did the media—before moderately toning down its belligerence in late June—savage Clinton in his first four months in office? To hear the media tell it, the bad news is all the administration's doing. After all, they say, Clinton's bumbling decisions—from A(ir Clinton) to Z(oë)—would do in even the most popular of politicians, and if that explanation doesn't convince you, the media have offered a dozen or so alternatives, including: Clinton's communications team has been arrogant; the White House

Research assistance for this article was provided by Danny Franklin, Spencer Freedman, Nicholas Joseph, Jennifer Levitsky, and Genevieve Murphy.

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press office has gone over the heads of the White House press corps; George Stephanopoulos smirked too much; and so on.

It's hard to argue with all that. And, to a certain degree, they're right (except perhaps for the smirk). But as the press ruminates on the slapstick communications effort, the conventional wisdom tells only half the story. Could it possibly be that the negative tone and content of the coverage has something to do with the press itself?

Not to worry; this won't parrot the tired administration line (any administration, that is) that the media are biased against it. They're not. But unlike administrations from Nixon's to Bush's, the Clinton crowd may be onto something. After being Deaverized, then Hortonized, and then mulling it over for the past few years, the presidential press has at long last taken on a fiercer, less trusting tone—a tone not heard in these parts since the nastiness of Watergate. "The press has a learning curve. The '88 campaign seared them," says Larry Sabato, author of *Feeding Frenzy* and professor of government at the University of Virginia. "The barbs are sharper; the coverage is tighter. They're going for the jugular."

Although reporters and editors are loath to admit it, a day-by-day comparison of Clinton White House reporters' dispatches with those of the media that covered the past administration confirms Sabato's claim. But it's not just that the press is tougher on Clinton than on any recent administration, but tougher in a very specific way: Because it's constantly looking for the con, the press won't take the bait on the Rockwellian images or be soothed by promises or be bullied by press officers. And if the media sense that they are getting

Peter de Sève

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the Reagan/Deaver treatment, woe be it to the messenger—whether it's the president or his flacks.

That, of course, is a step in the right direction. But like just about everything else that involves the press, it's turned into a caricature. In its zeal to expose presidential hooey, the media see—and report—slickness where it may not exist. Almost nothing that comes out of the White House, the press seems to be saying, should be taken at face value; hypocrisy could lurk in any and every press release. For Beleaguered Bill, that means his message of the day, even the noblest ones, such as PAC reform, is portrayed as a deception; it means that compromise—any compromise—becomes at best a broken promise, at worst a ruse; presidential trips, even a summit with Yeltsin, are described as Hollywood-style sales campaigns; progress, like the announcement of a national service program, is presented as an unfulfilled pledge; and even pathetic gaffes and loose-lipped friends become "evidence" of slickness. It means, in short, that in the press' zeal to avoid being snookered, it has neglected a crucial part of its job: an objective rendering of the news.

Hard pressed

And just how unobjective have the media been? Consider, for example, that for Bush, 74 percent of the evaluative comments made by TV reporters on evening news broadcasts during the first three months of his administration were positive, according to the Center for Media and Public Affairs. (The only group more likely to comment favorably on Bush was Republicans, with an 80 percent rating.) For Clinton, just 21 percent of the comments made by reporters have been positive. In fact, all other groups except Republicans—and that includes interest groups and foreign sources—were more likely to make positive remarks about Clinton than journalists were.

But numbers tell only a small part of the story. For a better picture of the media's double-standard, we'll have to go to the videotape, starting with a comparison of the way the national media handled four similar issues for the new administrations in 1989 and 1993:

National Service: Like Clinton in 1992, Bush in 1988 campaigned aggressively for national service. Bush's ambitious campaign rhetoric called specifically for a full-blown domestic peace corps. Once elected, however, Bush announced that his plan was—to be kind—less comprehensive: In fact, it consisted merely of creating the "Points of Light" foundation, funded with a paltry $25 million federal outlay.

The program, which was unveiled with a splashy photo-op at a New York youth center, where the Bushes touchingly cradled babies and related to a once-stabbed teenager, was trumpeted with glowing reports on all three networks. In fact, ABC News devoted an entire *American Agenda* segment to a weepy piece on the youth center and the Bush plan. NBC's John Cochran opened his piece with the Bushes entering the center to a cheering crowd: "President Bush chose New York to finish what he started at the Republican convention last summer, when he said volunteer groups could be 'a thousand points of light,'" and closed it saying that if the program is "far from the Great Society, that's fine. . . . The last thing [Bush] wants is a federal bureaucracy."

Clinton's plan, like Bush's, fell short of his campaign promise—but it came a whole lot closer. In fact, Clinton's $7 billion proposal not only calls for real money, but is expected to involve 100,000 youths by 1997. (Keep in mind, by the way, that John F. Kennedy's Peace Corps enrolled fewer than 16,000 volunteers at its peak in 1966.) How did the press react to the Clinton announcement, which, like Bush's, was presented in a made-for-TV photo-op at a youth center? CBS's Dan Rather offered a two-line news-read drily announcing the plan and then led into the day's White House report: a feature detailing how Clinton had cunningly evaded his pledge to cut the White House staff by 25 percent through a bookeeping maneuver. NBC's Andrea Mitchell, on the other hand, did offer a national service feature—but focussed on the plan's drawbacks. "Five million students now have college loans and could have assumed they'd be eligible," she reported, "but Clinton's plan would cover only a fraction of them." She added that "some critics worry that Clinton's proposal, small as it is, could be a

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boondoggle." After a scholar slammed the program, Mitchell closed: "Once again, Clinton has proved that there is big difference between what he promised as a candidate and what he can deliver as president." The print press was even less generous: *The Washington Post*'s front page story led not with the plan but by stating that Clinton had, in preparing the program, buckled to a special interest, watering it down from the original version. "Despite the grand words . . ." *The Wall Street Journal* reported, and "though smaller than the president had led audiences to expect, the program was introduced with a Clintonesque flair."

Education Reform: Clinton's campaign pledges for education reform, while ambitious, still did not match the scope of those made in 1988 by Bush, who had, after all, pledged to become our education president. What did Bush eventually present in April 1989? Not only was his "reform" package mostly a compendium of pilot programs, but he had reneged on his most basic promise: to increase the level of spending for education. In fact—in a move that would certainly be labeled a Slick Willie in 1993—the Bush plan, which was trumpeted as a 2 percent spending increase was, in reality, with inflation factored in, an education cut.

For Beleaguered Bill, the messages of the day, even the noblest ones, such as PAC reform, have been portrayed as deceptions; compromise—any compromise—has become at best a broken promise, at worst a ruse; even pathetic gaffes and loose-lipped friends become "evidence" of slickness.

The coverage? Again, it was universally favorable. Not one of the networks and few of the major papers noted the gap between the plan and the promise. Even worse, all three networks fell for the funding level charade, parroting the administration line that spending was upped. ABC News' Brit Hume, for example, featured a Democratic governor—who the Bush people had conveniently offered up for this very occasion—who praised the plan as "a strong new commitment." In print, *The Los Angeles Times*' front page story led saying that the Bush plan "backs up his campaign pledge to become the 'education president'. . . [with] a program intended to 'make excellence in education not just a rallying cry but a classroom reality.' "

Four years later, almost to the day, Clinton proposed a plan that, while it fell short of his campaign pledge, was not only more comprehensive than Bush's, but also closer to the rhetoric of his campaign (such as promising increased funding, which he came through on). Even so, *Time* labeled the plan "pallid," saying it "avoids all the toughest issues" and charged Clinton with breaking yet another campaign pledge. Other news organizations, such as *The Boston Globe*, stated falsely that Clinton was trying to fob off Bush's old plan as his own. And on TV, consider the negative tone of NBC's report, the thrust of which was that "some teachers today were skeptical," and which featured two teachers and an education expert, all of whom criticized the plan. "Probably just another level of paper that will have to come down," says one teacher. "We'll have to fill out something."

PAC and Lobby Reform: In 1988 Bush not only campaigned for PAC reform—as did Clinton in 1992—but also came through with a plan in his first 100 days. Coverage of the Bush program was straightforward and positive. ABC News' Ann Compton, for example, said that the plan came as a "surprise" to Congress and labeled it a "PAC attack." *The Washington Post*'s story led calling the Bush plan "a wide ranging package of ethics proposals for the three branches of government and . . . broad reform in campaign financing laws." Even the paper's editorial

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page labeled it "a workman-like and valuable job."

Yet while Clinton's plan is without question bolder, more comprehensive, and more detailed, the press, from *The New York Times* to *Newsweek*, has focussed largely on the Clinton con—that is, how the president and the Democrats have continued, even as they have proposed reform, to take money from special interest donors. CBS News' Rather, for example, offered: "Candidate Clinton said he would deliver . . . on election campaign reform. Today, President Clinton came out with his plan for what is called campaign reform . . . Correspondent Eric Enberg looks past the photo op. . . . " Enberg's report jabbed at Clinton for hypocrisy and noted that while Clinton was proposing reform, he and other Democrats were still taking thousands of dollars from "fat cats" and "influence brokers." That's good reporting, of course, but where were Enberg and the rest of the probing pack in 1989 when Bush proposed his reforms? Hadn't Bush and the Republicans continued to take money from PACs and lobbyists too?

The Populist Con: For presidents, the populism dance comes with the job. So when horseshoe-playing-Bush—who was about as elitist as presidents get these days—played the game, the press reacted about as expected. "No longer the Yale yuppie with a silver spoon in his mouth," NBC's Andrea Mitchell reported in April of 1989, "no longer the attack dog of the campaign. The new image: a guy who could live in your hometown." The same month, *Newsday* reported that in place of the "the Reagan glitz and glamour . . . have come a tumble of children, grandchildren, and in-laws the likes of which the White House has not seen since the days of John F. Kennedy. There are newborn puppies in the parlor and a freshly dug horseshoe pit in the back yard." In the meantime, the press dutifully ignored, for example, Bush's Kennebunkport trips, which routinely caused traffic backups and even interfered with the livelihood of local lobstermen, just as they had looked the other way when Ronald Reagan spent $50,000 of taxpayer money on planes and helicopters for a weekend excursion to Rancho del Cielo.

But for Clinton (even before the hair-care fiasco), the media made an outright mockery of his man-of-the-peoplism (despite his far more humble roots), from the White House jogging track to *The Washington Post*'s photo spreads whenever an administration biggie buys a pricey home.

Photoslop

It's not, however, just what the press has been reporting, but what it hasn't. Apparently in a feverish attempt to avoid becoming ventriloquist dummies for the Clintonites, the media have routinely glossed over and even taken pot-shots at the president's message in cases where a little Reagan-era flacking might have been entirely legitimate. A few examples:

● When Clinton took his act to California on May 18 to hype his jobs and defense conversion programs—neither of which had received air time on NBC—Andrea Mitchell's report not only ignored the Clinton proposals, but rambled through one negative image after another. After opening with a shot of presidential hecklers ("You broke your promise"), she reminded viewers of how Clinton said he had found himself "surprised" at the size of the deficit when he came into office. Mitchell then commented on his Hollywood connections ("To fix the president's image, the Hollywood producer who staged all those campaign bus trips showed up today"), before closing by saying that if Clinton has his way, we are all likely to face higher taxes.

➤ CBS took that same set of events and butchered the message even further. Also virtually ignoring Clinton's proposals (the jobs plan is mentioned only in reference to Clinton's troubled relationship with Congress), Susan Spencer's story covers: Clinton's ditching his middle class tax cut pledge; a soundbite from a woman who asks Clinton about his plan to convert defense industries to civilian projects ("What is it supposed to convert us into, except jobless, homeless, and hungry?"); high unemployment in California; and the "you broke your promise" hecklers.

➤ One of Clinton's fleeting moments of glory in May came when the House Ways and Means Committee passed his tax package. But NBC's Mitchell had other images in mind: "Today was mostly good news," she starts, and then explains why it was really a "black letter day." She proceeds to take us through a two minute tour of the dark side of the Clinton presidency.

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Clinton's tax package, she explains, will hit small business owners hard; the president is being attacked by Ross Perot; "Many view [Clinton] as a tax-and-spend Democrat;" "the president's ratings in the business community have plummeted;" Clinton's deficit reduction fund is, according to Republicans, a "shell game," and according to an independent analyst, a "gimmick." She closes relatively mercifully, saying the "point of [the economic plan] is to make the President *appear* more accountable, more concerned about deficit reduction."

➤ One of the President's few foreign policy highlights came on April 15, when he rallied seven nations to pledge $28 billion in new aid to Russia. CBS' Dan Rather granted this news a 10-second read before turning to correspondent Susan Spencer, who then proceeded with a full feature on the administration's ill-fated value-added tax trial balloon.

➤ Similarly, the administration's program to provide free vaccines for every child in America merited a short news read from NBC's Tom Brokaw, who provided neither an explanation of the plan nor any other detail. The feature report that followed, however, took viewers to New Haven to explain how "free vaccines won't alone solve the problem." On ABC, a story about the vaccine plan didn't take viewers that far. The network's report on the compromise that led to the final vaccine plan—a compromise that experts agreed made the plan more affordable and more closely targeted to the truly needy—focussed almost exclusively on Clinton's waffling; the piece ignored both the substance of the plan and its improvement. "The White House has now backed away from the one health care proposal the President has already made," reported correspondent Brit Hume. "On immunization, Mr. Clinton did more than just compromise—he agreed to a major overhaul of his plan. If this happens on health care, what emerges from Congress may not much resemble what Mr. Clinton sends up there."

With friends like these . . .

Obviously, something's bugging the media. Of course, the press is not monolithic. Even so, if you talk to enough reporters, a pattern emerges. For one, their prickliness towards the Clinton administration is, to a degree, personal. Most reporters are closer personally and politically to Democrats, which means that the press' standards with Democrats are generally higher. (Jimmy Carter was victimized by the double-standard problem as well.) At the same time, the natural reporter-Democrat bond means, ironically, that many reporters may be more willing to take liberties that offend their Democrat administration sources; some reporters admit (although not for attribution) that they feel more compelled to tread gently when dealing with Republican sources simply because they fear losing access.

Personalities aside, there's a more Clinton-specific reason why some reporters have been eager to paint the president as a con-man: They, rightly or wrongly, believe it. "He's not straightforward," explains Julia Malone, White House correspondent for Cox newspapers. "This feeling is not only of him, but his staff." Adds another White House reporter, who asked not to be quoted by name, "He's incredibly charming, but he lies. That's right, Clinton lies. Reporters hate that. I sympathize with his efforts, but it's easy to find yourself being angry with him."

Of course, no White House reporter who wants to keep his job until the next photo-op would dare let such an assessment slip into copy. So some do the next best thing: They show it, or at least try to. This helps explain why the media made such a hoo-ha about the travel story, the hypocrisy on PAC and lobbying reform, and the ersatz populism. They show it in dozens of smaller, subtler ways as well. On June 1, for example, *The New York Times* devoted an entire article to explain that Clinton had stepped out the previous day to play *three* holes of golf. Why an entire story for three holes? "The White House," the piece notes a few paragraphs in, "concerned about Mr. Clinton's image these days, had spent much of the day trying to avoid any mention of a presidential golf outing." The piece then takes the unusual step of explaining how the story was reported: "Mr. Stephanopoulos said early in the day that the President was going to Quantico, Va. to present awards at a golf tournament, and he insisted that he did not actually play golf. 'He had too much work,' he

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said. But Mr. Stephanopoulos called back to say there had been some 'confusion' and that the President did play."

Rose-colored window

To truly understand the media's recent edginess, however, you have to go back to the seventies. Watergate and Vietnam made the media realize that they were being manipulated by the communications gurus, and that turned a previously fangless press nasty. Into this minefield stepped Ford and then Carter. But by the time Reagan was elected, the cynicism shtick had grown old; the press—perhaps reflecting the mood of the nation, or weary of being labelled unpatriotic—mellowed its tone.

The timing couldn't have been better for the Deaverites who were not only able to sell upbeat images of their man's ability where he was making progress (such as in dealing with the Soviets) but also in areas where he wasn't, such as officiating at the Special Olympics (he had proposed cutting the budget for the disabled), and dedicating senior citizens projects (he had proposed cutting federal housing subsidies for the elderly). The media, of course, eventually caught on to the Reagan video game and grew progressively more savvy about being manipulated. But old habits die hard, and as Willie Horton proved, by 1988 the press was still malleable. Media cynicism remained, moreover, at bay for the most part during the first two years of the Bush administration, thanks in part to Bush's unique communications strategy—government by press conference. Although the conferences gave the appearance of an open and active president, the reality (as pointed out in a *Washington Monthly* article in December 1991) was that the briefings, which rarely covered any ground Bush did not want covered, were merely a backdoor method of making the president appear tough and active.

But by the third year of Bush's presidency, none of that seemed to matter. Coverage of the President turned decidedly sour. Part of the reason was, of course, the sinking economy. But it's also true that the untold numbers of seminars, articles, and books self-reflecting on the presidential cons of the past few years were beginning to sink in. The result was to throw the skepticism machine back into high gear.

How did the press react to Clinton's National Service program announcement? CBS's Dan Rather offered a two-line news-read drily announcing the plan and then led into the day's White House report: a feature detailing how Clinton had cunningly evaded his pledge to cut the White House staff by 25 percent through a bookeeping maneuver.

That helps explain not only the press's prickly aversion to any form of phoniness—real or perceived—in the current administration, but the harsh treatment Bush received in his last year as president. (By Campaign 1992, the old tricks were no longer working: Bush's sudden incarnation as a "reformer" might have flown in 1989, but it drew only mockery in 1992. The press even dug up and hit him for his failure to meet those long-forgotten campaign promises.)

Clinton benefitted from a cheerleading media during the second half of the campaign, but when he moved into the White House, he faced what was for the most part a new set of reporters—a group that continued its work on Clinton where it had left off on Bush.

In one sense, we should be grateful for the media's tougher tone. "No one," says *The New York Times*'s Andrew Rosenthal, who covered the Bush White House, "wants to be played for a chump." That's true, of course, but it's also true that avoiding the presidential hustle doesn't require leaving fair play behind. □

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The Shell Game

Pentagon officials think they have already conned Clinton out of billions for a wish list of expensive, unnecessary equipment. Here's how Clinton can prove them wrong

by David Segal

The military is going to take Bill Clinton to the cleaners.

It'll happen in hearing rooms and budget meetings around Washington, but the results won't differ much from those of a three-card monte game on a street in Manhattan: The president will have to fork over the money.

In the next five years, Clinton wants $60 billion in military cuts above and beyond what Bush was planning. In context, it's a remarkably timid step. If you don't count the Reagan years, since 1950 we spent an average of $263 billion a year on defense (in 1992 dollars), a sum which paid for one Cold War and two hot ones, Korea and Vietnam. Clinton's "downsized" five-year defense budget will spend, on average, slightly *more* than that—$265 billion in 1992 dollars. Add in the $3 trillion Reagan spent in the eighties, and Clinton's numbers are still a not-so-scaled-back 87% of what we averaged in spending between 1950 and 1989. The bad news is that even if Clinton gets his cuts, there will be no peace dividend. The worse news is that Clinton probably won't get his cuts.

Congress will soon begin deliberations on the Defense budget and debate the merits of a long list of equipment, most of which is phenomenally costly and totally unnecessary. With no other superpower on the horizon and the Soviet Union three years in the grave, it's time to ask not only the annual what-do-we-need-and-can-we-afford-it questions, but why it is that we are ponying up for so much stuff that we clearly can't afford. Answering this larger question helps explain why Clinton's cuts are so timid and why it's so unlikely he'll get them. The president's hand was dealt several years ago; it's a lousy one, and it's going to get lousier very soon. But to understand Clinton's predicament, you first need to know how the Pentagon managed to outmaneuver him even before he got to town. The first step is understanding the way the Department of Defense (DoD) gets what it wants.

When DoD asks Congress to fund new hardware, it is engaging in an elaborate and ritualized con which begins with the cost of the item in question. The price is what you might call a wild guess, but a low-balled wild guess. Because it's hard to predict what a piece of extremely high-tech equipment will ultimately cost, DoD can show Congress a price that looks affordable and is hard to argue about. Only one thing can reasonably be predicted: The price will go up. When your local car dealer pulls this kind of stunt, it's called the "bait and switch." In the Pentagon, it's called the "buy in."

The buy in makes the annual Defense budget fiction, but the real whoppers are in the rest of

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the Pentagon's six-year plan and beyond, which is classified. (What Congress debates is the first year of a continually updated six-year plan.) Budgets for these outlying years are based on several breathtakingly silly assumptions. The first is that the Defense budget will grow at rates far greater than it actually will. (Even during the Reagan build-up, the Pentagon over-estimated what it would get.) It is also assumed that the investment budget, the part which funds new hardware, will grow faster than the rest of the budget (It doesn't). Finally, it's assumed that when a defense manufacturer builds something it will eventually get smarter at building it, and therefore be able to produce it for a lower per unit price as it makes more. (Almost without exception, "learning curves" are less steep than anticipated, and occasionally costs increase.)

Of course, Pentagon officials know these assumptions are absurd, but by using them they can pack the budget with all manner of gizmos and argue, straight-facedly, that the gizmos are affordable. In DoD this is known as "front-loading," though another term—lying—may better capture it.

Patriot games

Here's how front-loading works. Let's say Defense officials want a new vehicle, the X-88, which takes off as a four seater helicopter and then becomes a Winnebego. First, Pentagon planners will cough up reams of scientific evidence that the X-88 will work. Then evidence is produced that the machine can be built for a reasonable sum and its per unit cost will diminish over time. (Data compiled through the Congressional Budget Office shows that in 1983 DoD was predicting that costs would decrease for 57 out of 69 weapons program sampled.) Finally, stirring words are spoken about the threats we face which make a flying Winnebego essential to our national security. The conclusion is clear: We can afford it and the country desperately needs it. Congress allocates a sum to get production underway, using numbers based on the Pentagon's low buy-in cost and its learning curve predictions. The X-88 has been front-loaded.

The pandemonium this decision will cause won't be evident for years. By then, if the X-88 is like most Defense equipment, serious design flaws will have been discovered: the chopper stalls in its Winnebego phase, and its blades keep falling off. But at this point the makers of the X-88 have sprinkled jobs in Congressional districts far and wide. (The B-1 may be the record-holder here, seeding federal dollars in 400 out of a possible 435 districts.) "By designing overly complex weapons, then spreading subcontracts, jobs, and profits all over the country, the political engineers in the Defense Department deliberately magnify the power of these forces to punish Congress," writes Franklin Spinney, a 20-year veteran of the Air Force and Office of the Secretary of Defense, in his pamphlet, *Defense Power Games*.

The X-88 needs a major design overhaul and costs are running wild. Time to stop the program? Scale it back? Build a prototype?

Probably not. The two players who could possibly stop this looming debacle have excellent reasons not to intervene. The program manager at the Pentagon knows that in peace-time, he who procures the most wins, because promotions go to people who bring in money. Odds are, too, that the manufacturer's liaisons are former DoD employees, and they all used to barbecue together. Congressmen, for their part, are by now most worried about losing jobs, chiefly their own. Everyone's interest is perfectly lined up with that of the builder who, naturally, would want to make the X-88 even if it exploded when you looked at it.

But by this time, economic pressure is rising. The X-88 will be only one of several troubled programs. Budgets, of course, are less than what the Pentagon had anticipated in its six-year plan, and more stuff has been front-loaded in the interim. Congress asks Defense to scale back its procurement budget. Generals begin barking that Congress is meddling with the nation's security.

Meanwhile, the equipment that has been deployed already is breaking more often and costing more to fix than anticipated. That puts a squeeze on the Operations and Maintenance budget (O and M), which pays for everything that keeps the military ready to fight. So just as Congress puts a squeeze on the investment budget from one end, O and M needs more of the pie. There's a budget shortfall to the tune of many billions. Something has to give.

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Instead of cutting hardware, the Pentagon deploys a brilliant stratagem: It "stretches out" procurement programs. Planners allocate less money to the X-88 each year by pushing production schedules into the future; the total number to be bought and the rate at which they'll be made decrease. If you're a Defense official and don't mind spending unholy billions on equipment that is often unnecessary and doesn't work, this approach is irresistible because it allows you to announce that you're being fiscally prudent, or grappling with changed world threats, when you're actually sowing the seeds of a financial disaster.

The obvious problem with stretch-outs is that when the hardware is really needed, it slows the military's rate of modernization. The less obvious problem is that stretch-outs, coupled with ongoing front-loading, are a time bomb. By pushing production schedules into the future, as you add more unrealistically priced programs, you create what the Pentagon calls the "investment bow wave." In the short term you look like you are spending less, but in the years beyond the five year plan—the "invisible years," as they're helpfully known—you're committed to spending vast sums on all that delayed equipment.

Unfortunately for Clinton, a bow wave of proportions that can only be guessed at—$300 billion, $500 billion, more?—created by the stretch-outs and front-loading of the Reagan and Bush years is coming. And it will be arriving sometime during Clinton's administration.

The nearest historical parallel to Clinton's situation is the post-Vietnam War downsizing. Then, as now, the size of the force was cut, some short-term procurement programs were either scaled back or stopped, and we sold some weapons overseas (Nixon sold them to Iran; we now sell to Saudi Arabia). Meanwhile, the great hardware maw was front-loaded with a whole host of big ticket items, like the F-16, the F-18, the Patriot, and the M1.

What happened next is history, and it helped cost Carter his job. As the bill for all this hardware was coming due, the Pentagon under Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter tapped into the O and M budget, thus reducing training schedules and damaging readiness. The Hollow Military was born. We had warehouses of new equipment, but our troops and pilots were undertrained, and we lacked the spare parts and mechanical support to wage war effectively.

Clinton will face the same military budget shortfalls which led to Carter's fiasco as the new bow wave begins to arrive. But the end of the Cold War and the soaring national debt will make Reagan's solution—increased military spending—politically untenable. Meanwhile, the impetus to keep up expenditures in both the investment and the O and M budgets will escalate. There's pressure to keep expensive items alive (or stretched out) because Reagan's build-up added 1.4 million jobs to the defense industry, giving Congress a huge stake in the ongoing hardware raree-show. Simultaneously, maintenance and spare parts costs will soar because high-tech equipment is costly to fix.

Clinton is cornered. The bills for all the front-loaded programs of the eighties—the C-17, the Osprey, the F-18E, the F-22, the Commanche helicopter, a raft of ballistic missile defense systems, a new carrier, and the list goes on—will come due or simply grow in the next few years. If he trims the O and M budget, a phalanx of generals will scream "Hollow Military!" and demand money. (In May, that's exactly what happened.) There *have* been some troubling readiness problems reported from the field, but you can count on Pentagon officials exploiting the hollow military scare to keep the spigot open.

Multiply these problems by Clinton's desire to be respected by the military (and the poor start he made by pushing to end the gay ban), and it's no wonder that the Pentagon believes, as one Defense official put it, "We're going to clean his clocks."

Lawyers, guns, and money

To slip this noose, Clinton will have to cut merchandise in the investment bow wave rolling at him and, even more importantly, revamp the system which produced it. The Pentagon is now like a drunkard in denial—it first needs to admit it has a problem. Then it can make more than just superficial changes. Rather than trying to predict costs 10 years down the line, Defense should start a "fly before you buy" system. Any item that fails to perform as advertised or doesn't show an advantage over something already built should be scrapped. The Pentagon

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hates this kind of prototyping—and fatuously claims it's expensive—because it opens the door for program cancellations. But the practice has been used effectively for years by Japanese auto makers to keep costs down, and it would help identify losers in DoD's pipeline before they are cemented with jobs and billions in sunk costs.

A budgeting system connected to reality would help, too. The Pentagon is wise enough to consider worst-case scenarios when it prepares for battle, but uses only best-case scenarios when it prepares a budget. Drafting several contingency budgets based on genuine economic possibilities would not only prevent the mayhem of shortfalls, but would also create pressure for the military to produce realistic cost predictions. Currently, DoD budgets are so over-estimated that builders have no reason to constrain themselves—generally, if they say they need more, they're promised more. Worse, without genuine cost estimates, figuring out the number of Xs we could buy instead of Ys—the sort of information any shopper at a supermarket uses—is impossible. Finally, real numbers might be more forthcoming with this simple measure: Swear in Defense officials when they show up to tempt Congress with that low, low buy-in cost, and require program managers to sign affidavits affirming the truthfulness of their budget and performance estimates. Front-loading would thus be punishable as perjury.

Secondly, Clinton will have to fight for deep, smart cuts from both the investment and the O and M budgets. Here, a ready-made, though novel, framework exists: Push for a military that is shaped by threats it could conceivably face with an eye toward a budget that it could conceivably be allocated, then carve away what isn't needed or was designed for a different fight. The DoD is conducting its own "bottom up review" of these issues and its findings are due in July. But like other internal reviews before it, this one will come to overly meek conclusions and, far worse, won't end the procurement scams which drive the problem. Look for force reductions, lots of stretching, and a few low-pain cancellations.

Bolder measures are needed. Our present procurement course sets us toward a military stocked with billions in unnecessary, staggeringly expensive equipment. As for the O and M account, it's stuffed with fat, and has been for years. But the military will protect it by playing the readiness card, and, inevitably, Congress will demand that costs be cut by relying more heavily on ground combat reserves in the new force structure mix. Unfortunately, reserves aren't capable of fighting on short notice. In sum, the military of the nineties is likely to be both extremely costly (chockablock with useless, expensive-to-maintain stuff) and not particularly good at what we need it to do (relying more on troops which can't be quickly deployed).

Real cuts will be critical. If the present bow wave is allowed to arrive, it will bring with it not just billions in hardware, but constant pressure to either raid or expand the readiness account, or to fire more active combat troops in favor of reserves.

Two over-arching ideas could help Congress decide where to find real savings. The first is

THE DATE: IT'S JULY, 1993

Keep this in mind and much is possible, because the demise of the Soviet Union has yet to kill a lot of enormously complex machinery designed for World War III. Some examples illustrate the point.

The centerpiece of the Navy's future fleet of destroyers, the Arleigh Burke, is fitted with the AEGIS combat system, which is designed to deal with hordes of incoming Soviet land-based aircraft and anti-ship missiles. Today, and for the foreseeable future, the threat of aerial attacks on the Navy has significantly dwindled, and the worst missile assault we can imagine is a few Exocets from a third world country. But we're presently planning to build three Arleigh Burkes a year for the next six years at about $850 million a piece (in 1993 dollars). Reduce the number some more—or cancel the program outright—and we can consolidate our two surface combatant manufacturers, a move which these purchases are needlessly forestalling.

The Air Force's F-22 scores a triple play typical of the boondoggles we're investing in these days: It's unnecessary, expensive, *and* won't perform as advertised. It was designed to be stationed in a place like England and serve as a

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lightning-quick response to a Soviet invasion of Germany. Has the demise of the Warsaw Pact made the plane obsolete? Hardly. Now we need it because it's stealthy and, more remarkably, can fly long distances at supersonic speeds and the Air Force needs a plane like that because. . . well, just because, *o.k.*?

Even granting that, for whatever reason, we need a plane that can cruise at supersonic speeds, there's a major problem with the F-22: It can't cruise at supersonic speeds. "It's another military fantasy," says Jim Stevenson, an aviation historian and former editor of the Navy's classified *Top Gun Journal*. "This will be scandal in the tradition of the B-2, which was supposed to be stealthy and isn't." The leading minds in supersonic flight say that for a jet to fly supersonically for long periods it needs a fuel fraction of at least .35 (put simply, 35% of the plane's weight must be fuel). The Air Force has only recently admitted that the F-22 will have a fuel fraction of between .26 and .30, no better than fighters developed 40 years ago.

But let's allow that the F-22 can do everything its proponents say it can. Wouldn't you have a plane that every Air Force pilot worth his wings would want in combat? Wrong question, Senator. The buy-in cost of an F-22 in constant 1990 dollars is $97 million per plane, a price which ludicrously assumes no cost growth. An F-16 in constant 1990 dollars costs $17 million a copy, which means you could buy just about six F-16s for each F-22. Ask a pilot which side of a six-on-one dogfight he'd rather be on. Or ask a commander what would give him more bombing punch. The Air Force says we should build the F-22 because it would give our pilots a great technological edge. The problem with this reasoning is that *our pilots already have a great technological edge*. The F-16, F-15, F-14 and the F-18 equipped with modern weapons are better than any MiG ever made, and we have those planes in numbers large enough to swarm any conceivable enemy.

Some programs score a double play—they're simply expensive and unnecessary. Take the Commanche helicopter. Please. Back in 1983, it was conceived as a cheaper way to build an alternative to the Apache. Today the Commanche's per unit price has doubled to $20 million (and will keep rising), making it more expensive than the Apache. For the added money you get—see if you can guess—nothing. The Commanche won't be capable of any missions that the Apache can't already do, and that's assuming the Commanche works. The Army could instead procure an upgraded version of the AH-1W, a superb helicopter which the Marines are buying. Put the Commanche out of its misery and you've saved $1.2 billion.

Arguably the most absurd vestige of Cold War thinking—and the strongest testimony to the power of front-loading—is the plan to build another aircraft carrier. We don't need it, and it wouldn't be very helpful if we did. As World War II showed, carriers are ideal for fighting other navies. Problem is, there are no other navies. What these floating cities are not good at is what they are now being touted to do: add aerial punch to a land war. A carrier has, at the high end, 58 jets on board that can be used for bombing: 48 F-18s which normally carry two tons of ordnance each and 10 A-6s which normally carry 4 tons each. That means the maximum collective wallop of one carrier throwing all it has at an enemy is, very roughly, 136 tons of ordnance. To get a sense of how tiny a contribution that is, in the Gulf War we dropped 85,000 tons on Iraq before the land invasion even got underway. (The Air Force's B-52s alone dropped more ordnance than all of the Navy's and the Marine's sorties combined.)

But rumor has it that the *Nimitz*, one of the Navy's most reliable carriers, will be tied up rather than given a new nuclear core, the better to justify construction of a new carrier of the very same class. And these plans could go ahead in spite of Clinton's stated intention to go from 14 to 10 carriers, which in itself hardly seems sufficient. The CBO estimates that Clinton's move would save $6 billion in operating costs, and that doesn't account for the savings that would accumulate by mothballing (or, in some instances, not procuring) the 18 or so support ships each carrier requires.

Other built-for-the-Soviet programs scheduled to cost us small fortunes include the B-2 (20 more for $1 billion each), which was designed to bomb the Soviets, and the Seawolf (one more for $1.6 billion), which was designed to take on a class of Soviet nuclear submarines that might not even get built. And there's lots more. About the only argument left for any of this stuff is jobs. But how can Congress kill Clinton's $16 billion

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stimulus package on the grounds that it's wasteful, and then sign on for what is essentially a (far larger) stimulus package for the defense industry? There isn't a more wasteful, inefficient group of manufacturers in the country, and there is scarcely a more wasteful and inefficient use of government investment than billions in products that no one can use. M.I.T. economists Jerome Wiesner and Kosta Tsipis have published a heartening statistic which Congressmen should keep in mind: The same sum of money that creates one job in defense industries will create two jobs anywhere else.

Another idea to drum into the military is

STOP REPEATING YOURSELVES

For decades the four branches of the military have fought for as much mission capability as possible, yielding expensive redundancy throughout. You might have thought that reconfiguring to fight a lesser enemy would mean the military could do some cutting, but the opposite is true. Each branch is now developing a reason why *it* should be the ascendant component in the new interventionary force—and therefore get all the stuff it requested. The Navy can do the job, but it needs a deep strike capability and therefore planes like the F-18E, thank you very much. The Air Force can do it, but it'll take the F-22. The Marines can do it, but give them the Osprey, for God's sake, so they can do it fast. The Army can do it, but they'll need the Comanche.

Forcing the four branches to complement, rather than duplicate, each other would save sums that can only be guessed at. It might, for instance, help to rein in the largest single item in the Defense budget, the Strategic Defense Initiative. Like every government program with staying power, Star Wars, with the help of Congress, Bush, and most recently Les Aspin, has adapted to the times. Its life was saved, as it were, by the SCUD. In the wake of the Gulf War, Congress passed the Missile Defense Act which called for the Pentagon to deploy a ground-based ballistic missile defense system by 1996.

The chum was in the water and the feeding frenzy began. Every branch of the military was demanding something and before long, DoD was funding an alphabet soup of eight overlapping projects to develop theater missile defense—from Corp SAM to THAAD to ERINT and a few in between. So over the past three years, while the military is supposed to be bracing for an historic downsizing, funding for theater missile defense has climbed more than 1000%, from $173 million in 1991 to $1.8 billion in the 1994 budget, and the Pentagon projects that to fund all eight programs in fiscal year 1995 will take $3 billion.

Of course, it makes some sense to figure out ways to stop ballistic missiles, but the redundancy here is staggering and as threats to the Republic go, this one has been oversold. Ballistic missiles, especially ones with chemicals and nuclear warheads, are extremely sophisticated weapons. What's far more likely is a country loading a bomb in a plane and dropping it, a sort of airborne variant of the World Trade Center approach. But even as the Pentagon adds further billions to the $32 billion we've already spent on ballistic missile defense, it's scaling back the U.S. air defense system which provided air patrols to prevent just such improvised attacks.

DoD has long preferred what is expensive and might not work over what is cheap (or already built) and could be useful. Prestige is derived from high-cost programs, and front-loading makes high-cost programs a cinch to start and hard to stop. So we pour billions into the F-22, but still have yet to develop a medium-range drone—an unmanned plane—which could be used in lieu of live pilots for reconnaissance missions. A variety of deep strike jets are in the works, but the Air Force is retiring the far cheaper A-10s, the best close air support plane in the military, even though close air support is a far more likely mission. A slew of Arleigh Burkes is heading our way, but we had to call on our European allies to clear the mines Iraq left in the Persian Gulf after the war.

Unreserved

There's also plenty to carve from the O and M account. There are, for instance, 140,000 military and civilian personnel working for DoD in Washington alone. A Pentagon official recently estimated that if you lined up all of these milicrats and marched them, four abreast, the parade would be 27 miles long and take eight hours to

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walk past a given point. It's the same story outside the beltway. The military has yet to eliminate a single major headquarters, and personnel reviews tasked with downsizing consistently recommend far more staff than is necessary in thousands of nook and crannie operations around the globe.

But what's more likely is a cut in muscle rather than fat. Congress will insist on reducing O and M outlays by creating a force structure which relies more on the reserves than it has in the past. In the Air Guard, this makes perfect sense, and has for a while. Reserve squadrons, many of which are staffed with battle-tested Vietnam veterans, regularly outperform their active counterparts. Reserves in combat support roles—those moving equipment, manning communications, etc.—have performed ably as well.

But lean more on reserve combat troops? Unfortunately, in the military, as in life, you get what you pay for. National Guard combat units cost roughly 30 percent of their reserve counter parts, and it shows. During the Gulf War, by the time the "round-out brigades"—Guard divisions which are supposed to combine with two active divisions during war time—were ready to join the fray, Schwarzkopf was briefing the world on his Hail Mary end run.

Even though reserves are cheaper, they're actually a lousy value. They get the same per-day pay rate as actives, but for a reason that not even National Guard Association spokesman Vic Debima could explain, when a reservist toils for two days he gets paid for four days of work. Just for fun, see if you can work out a deal like that with *your* boss. Moreover, if future missions are more likely to resemble the operations in Somalia than the war in Iraq, it doesn't make sense to rely on combat Guard units. "Psychologically, peacekeeping missions are very stressful," says Eliot Cohen, director of strategic studies at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. "It takes a lot of discipline and training to shoot, but it takes even more training and discipline not to shoot. It's like police work in the inner cities. Would we send police reservists to inner cities?"

But Congress loves the reserves. There are plenty of reservists, after all, in every district, and the National Guard caucus in the Senate is the largest in the building; some 70 legislators have signed on. "These guys make the NRA look like amateurs," says Martin Binkin of the Brookings Institution. They get results. The reserves have already been downsized a lot less than the actives, and they're sure to take a fraction of the hit in the coming years.

A force structure not buffeted by Congressional cross-winds would emphasize the one thing reserves most lack: training. Back, for instance, when President Johnson halted the air campaign against North Vietnam in 1968, the Navy and the Air Force were killing just two and a half MiGs for each American jet shot down. During the lull, the Navy set up Top Gun, a grad school for pilots. Without any upgrades to their F-4 Phantom jets, the Navy pilots' kill ratio soared to 12 to 1 when the dog fights started again. The Air Force's remained at two and a half to one.

This parable has lessons for more than just force structure. Training, unlike the F-22 and the B-2, doesn't spend a lot of money and spread jobs in every direction. But the military needs training far more than either of those planes. We'll keep getting those planes, however, and a force that lacks requisite skills (or is smaller) until the Defense budget is rigged to produce what's needed, rather than what's expensive, and until all that front loaded hardware no longer puts pressure on the O and M budget. Clinton should take up the cudgels and swing until programs in the investment bow wave heading his way are dead. It will take time and political capital, but it can be done. But if he doesn't, at the same time, fight to change the system which landed this mess in his lap, the fight will be for naught. He'll have killed the F-22, but soon enough Pentagon officials will appear before Congress muttering that what they *really* need is . . . the X-88. They'll bear reams of paper proving a whole bunch can be bought for cheap. And so on.

The Defense con will have been driven briefly out of town, not put out of business. Real military reform would create a system of budgeting that is driven by threats in the world and a sane understanding of economic constraints. Just look at what is—and is not—coming in hardware and manpower and you'll realize that's not the system we have now. □

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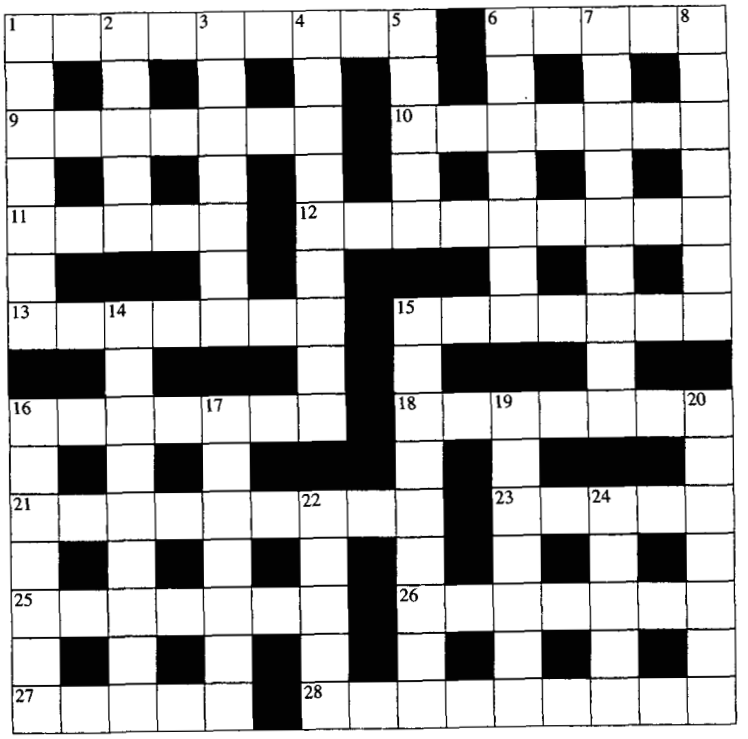
POLITICAL PUZZLE

by John Barclay

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g. (2,3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g. USA, are treated as one word.



ACROSS

1. This President was determined vote loser. (9)
6. Fleece-seeker appears in this manner in start of first month. (5)
9. Trouble term not troubled. (7)
10. That is five in pain to win. (7)
11. Joint member returns for singing group. (5)
12. Persistent technicians make steer rest uncomfortably. (9)
13. Loosely ratable prairie country. (7)
15. Fiscal authority who adjusted Japanese currency? (7)
16. United Nations loser improperly makes decision. (5,2)
18. Clan hut built up for missing official. (2,5)
21. Neat shams set up for Long Island location. (9)
23. Flood management position after first week. (5)
25. Turn left, sir, for spoilsport. (7)
26. Lets flu spread to maximum extent. (7)
27. One thousand in this return makes sense. (5)
28. War log Kennedy edited for Western hawk. (9)

DOWN

1. Spin around the first Capitol feature. (7)
2. Hockey great at office for Senator's first team. (5)
3. Creel to set up for important quadrennial nonentity. (7)
4. Arrange endless tennis rate for harbor. (9)
5. Quality specified in extra italics. (5)
6. President gets first joy over his next six official nominees. (7)
7. Noses vent weirdly for repeat candidates for President. (9)
8. Senile assembly follows November 1 rating. (7)
14. Property for former Senator in existence. (9)
15. Aesthetic rating for tuba flue I made. (9)
16. Carelessly rams set and makes yacht repair. (7)
17. Herb to distribute after first half of show. (7)
19. Barn opening amid cattle sounds is dirty trick. (3,4)
20. Inadvertently met rash rodent. (7)
22. Awkwardly grips segment of plant. (5)
24. Time just before New Testament contest. (5)

Answers to last month's puzzle:

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Soundbitten

How the 1992 campaign turned the public onto politics and off the media

by Dan Balz

Strange Bedfellows:
How Television and the Presidential Candidates Changed American Politics
Tom Rosenstiel, *Hyperion, $24.95*

Last year's presidential campaign seems destined to be remembered as the year Larry King, Phil Donahue, and Tabitha Soren strode across America's television screens and grabbed hold of the political process. In the shorthand by which we often label campaigns, 1992 was the Year of the New Media.

Consider the evidence that the traditional media played second fiddle to the upstarts. After mainstream organizations had passed on the story, the *Star*, a supermarket tabloid, set the pack running after Bill Clinton and Gennifer Flowers in New Hampshire last year. Then came Ross Perot, who played the new media like a virtuoso, winning hours of live television time and still avoiding serious scrutiny. Clinton used everything from town meetings to Arsenio Hall to CompuServe. This spring, the new president himself, at a black-tie dinner honoring radio and television correspondents, thumbed his nose at the traditional media and pointed out how clever he had been to ignore them. "You know why I can stiff you on the press conferences? Because Larry King liberated me from you by giving me the American people directly," Clinton said.

In the Hundred Years War between press and politicians, each campaign shapes the next, and perhaps none more so than 1988. That campaign, remembered now for the Pledge of Allegiance, Willie Horton, and "Read my lips," left the media in a sour and surly mood—not because George Bush defeated Michael Dukakis, but because politicians had assumed the upper hand in the combat. They were using smart bombs while the media were still armed with muskets. The politicians knew how to bait the media into talking about what they wanted to talk about, and little else. In newsrooms across the country, editors and reporters vowed to do things differently in 1992.

One of the news organizations that struggled with that question throughout 1992 was ABC News. But unlike most other networks and newspapers, ABC did not struggle in private. Tom Rosenstiel, the astute media critic of the *Los Angeles Times*, was given an inside seat to watch the evolution of network television in this transitional year. Rosenstiel's perch could not have been more ideal, and his fine book is the latest in the genre of behind-the-scenes examinations of American politics (from *The Making of the President* series to *The Selling of the President*). His searching and occasionally searing criticism of the media in the campaign year is a welcome tonic. Coming at a time when the press has given itself good reviews for attempting to refocus its campaign coverage, Rostenstiel's book is a reminder of how short we fell and some of the reasons it will be hard to do better.

Peter Jennings was one of those most influenced by the negative reviews of the press coverage of 1988. He wanted a new approach to covering politics. The same held for Paul Friedman, the executive producer of "World News Tonight." The results, however, were mixed. While ABC and the other networks forced changes in the primary sea-

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son debates that resulted in more informative encounters among the candidates, ABC's evening news show did just four issue pieces on the Democrats during the primaries, and of eight stories on Paul Tsongas, none dealt with his ideas. When the Flowers story broke, "World News Tonight" reported nothing the first night, while "Nightline" devoted its entire program to the charges. While newspapers dug into Clinton's background in Arkansas (often producing more smoke than fire), ABC limped behind. "ABC was largely irrelevant amid the scrutiny of Clinton except as a vague echo," Rosenstiel writes. "World News Tonight"—like many in the mainstream press—ignored Ross Perot until the new media had made him a major factor in the race. Only then did ABC devote an hour of prime time to him.

On the other hand, ABC sought to minimize coverage of routine daily campaign events and concentrate more on substance. "Nightline" used its unique standing to push stories forward, especially on Clinton and the draft. And in a year when the voters' agenda drove the campaign, the networks used televised focus groups and interviews to bring those voices into coverage.

Network blues

But Rosenstiel's overall portrait of ABC is troubling. ABC was slow to engage (caught up in the public cynicism toward politics generally), sometimes timid in chasing the story, and occasionally impotent when it did. Like other news organizations, ABC was jerked along by events and controlled its own fate. In many ways, the network succeeded in doing some things differently and well. It held its audience, and it made some money—in television, that counts as a pretty good year. On the morning of the election, Friedman praised his troops for their work and told them, "I hope that the academics who have made a living criticizing us for the last four years will be among the unemployed tomorrow."

It is unfair to single out ABC for criticism. Had Rosenstiel watched any other network, or any major newspaper, he might have found a similar story. For all the improvements, Rosentiel says much of the coverage is still too heavily driven by poll results, which are sometimes wrongly interpreted, and open to manipulation by smart campaigns. Writing more broadly about the entire industry during Campaign '92, Rosenstiel says, "What I saw, from the other side of the camera lens, suggests the press has less power to reform politics than many imagine. Yet the press's cynicism has already done great harm. There is a reason for leavened optimism. Technology is democratizing the American political landscape. But it is also lowering the standards of American journalism."

Let's deal with both of those charges. That technology is the great leveler in American politics is indisputable—and all for the better. I realized this not by watching Larry King a hundred times last year, but as a result of a message left on my voice mail in the spring of 1992. A university professor in upstate New York had called to upbraid me for something I had written about Perot's appearance before the American Society of Newspaper Editors. I had suggested that Perot was vague in explaining how he would root out drugs in America's cities; my caller, who had watched the session on C-SPAN, said I was wrong. I went back and reviewed the transcript and came to a humbling conclusion: My report was not incorrect, but the caller had seized on another aspect of Perot's answer and screened out what I had used for my story. He was no more incorrect in his interpretation of events than I was in mine. It was clear that the world had changed for those of us who call ourselves reporters.

For years, we held the upper hand with the public. We were observers who saw events and reported them. Now, with CNN, C-SPAN, and other cable outlets, anyone with the time and interest can see the same events. Although it's impossible to measure in any scientific way, this technological democratization most likely increased interest in the campaign and boosted turnout in 1992. In that way, the new media have been healthy. But they also allow politicians to avoid genuine scrutiny of their ideas. The new media may provide more verbiage, but they do not necessarily provide more useful information. One of the great failures on the part of the media last year was their inability to hold Clinton accountable for his ideas—from the cost of his health care program to his propensity to promise new programs he couldn't pay for. More time on the Sunday interview shows and less time in front of audiences throwing softballs might have

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spared Clinton some of the credibility problems he has encountered since the election.

Rosenstiel's analysis makes clear that the notion of a homogeneous new media as a witting or unwitting ally of the candidates in competition with the old media is simplistic. Viewed benignly, the new media provide an enlightened forum for democracy in which the candidates meet the public in the electronic town hall. But if Bill Clinton thinks he has somehow mastered the new media, he should be reminded of what sparked the Gennifer Flowers episode. The new media are not only electronic town halls but also tabloid television, with its interest in sex and sensationalism; local television, with its high concentration on crime and scandal; and radio talk shows that may be as unreflective of the public mood as a League of Women Voters discussion, and more easily manipulated.

And the media's cynicism? To the degree that it exists, it is perhaps a function of the old media's desire not to become partners with campaigns and presidents in transmitting the spin of the day to the American people. Another reason could be the old media's search for new angles to tell stories that have been already reported in brief on CNN and the radio. At ABC, Friedman worried that by 6:30 every night, viewers would already know the headlines and therefore would want something different.

But the public sees the great journalistic beast differently. The new media have given people a way into the process, and voters see the traditional media, with their talking heads and rushes to judgment, as an intrusion. The more easily people can filter events through their own lenses, the more likely they are to suspect interpretation. The media are rarely seen as acting in the public interest. Instead they are seen as part of the problem. If anything, the media are disliked even more than politicians, a badge we should not wear in honor. Fixing that should be part of the discussion for 1996. □

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Philadelphia Story

What urban America could learn from Frank Rizzo, one of the country's most infamous city politicians

by John J. Dilulio, Jr.

Frank Rizzo: The Last Big Man in Big City America
S.A. Paolantonio, *Camino Books, $22*

In 1990, a delegation from the U.S.S.R.'s Supreme Soviet and Congress of People's Deputies came to America to explore the nuts and bolts of democracy and capitalism. The delegation's first stop was Princeton University. At the coffee break following my presentation, several delegates asked follow-up questions on topics ranging from federalism (how it really works) to junk bonds (where to buy them). But one delegate asked where in the "States of America" I "had grown." I told him Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and credited his nodding smile of recognition to Benjamin Franklin, the Philadelphia Orchestra, or perhaps hockey's Philadelphia Flyers (who mopped the floor with the Soviet national team in the seventies). But then he said, "Dear John, Philadelphia is the city of Rizzo. A great man of the people, true?"

True, ultimately. S.A. Paolantonio, an award-winning national reporter for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, has written a dramatic yet scholarly book on the late tough-cop-turned-mayor Frank L. Rizzo. Drawing expertly on hundreds of sources ranging from Rizzo's heretofore tight-lipped widow, Carmella, to his political confidants, including Richard Nixon, Paolantonio combines first-rate biography with compelling political analysis to produce a remarkably revealing book on urban personalities, politics, and policies. At a time when "the cities" have edged their way back onto the national political agenda, here is a book about a particular city that holds general lessons about where post-L.A. riot urban America needs to go and how it might actually get there: by forceful leadership with a human touch.

Paolantonio's subject more than justifies the subtitle. Rizzo *was* the "last big man in big city America." Presidents consulted him. Street punks feared him. The mafia would not deal drugs in the city because of him. He was more powerful than Chicago's Daley yet more beloved than New York's La Guardia. Forever scorned by the city's WASP establishment, he was finally embraced by its black leaders. He defied the town's powerful Democratic machine in the seventies and rolled over its Republican machine in the eighties. And then on July 16, 1991, on the eve of one of the most spectacular comebacks in the history of urban politics, he did the one thing that most Philadelphians, life-long admirers and inveterate critics alike, never thought he would do: He died.

He died, but the city he loved did not. And while urban America's "big men" are gone, a new generation of competent and compassionate urban leaders, both men and women, have begun to arrive. For example, a story in the April 1993 issue of *Governing* magazine documents how well Philadelphia is doing under its present mayor, Ed Rendell. The city has renegotiated contracts with public employees and improved its bond rating. It maintains one of the lowest crime rates in urban America. And it remains a "city of neighborhoods" where life can be fulfilling and affordable for everyone from old working-class families to newly-arrived yuppies.

The seeds of this Philadelphia renaissance were planted by Rizzo. He held the line on inner-city crime when to do so was considered racist. He implemented plans to preserve and invest in urban neighborhoods before Kempites invented enterprise zones and Clintonites reinvented them as empowerment zones. He criticized the performance of public schools and took on teachers' unions when to do so was neither politically fashionable nor expedient. And,

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above all else, he was a real, hands-on populist who gave Philadelphians the sense that they were part of one big extended family.

The tragedy of Rizzo's career is that it wasn't until the year he died that his populist politics included blacks. But, as he emerges from this well-balanced book, Rizzo was a flawed yet public-spirited man who saved a city and who came close to redeeming himself in the eyes of many who had long opposed him.

Rizzo was Philadelphia's Democratic mayor from 1972 to 1980. The son of Italian immigrants, he grew up on the ethnic mean streets of South Philadelphia in the thirties and forties. As he grew into his 6'2", 250-pound frame, he grew into his reputation as the toughest good kid in the neighborhood, the type who didn't bully anybody but whom nobody, not even the local gangsters, dared to bully. Like his father before him, in 1943 he became a spit-and-polish beat cop. Known throughout the city as "the Cisco Kid" for his fearless first-in-action exploits against drug dealers and other criminals, he rose steadily through the ranks.

In 1967, Rizzo became police commissioner. Within a few months of his appointment he began to make national and international headlines. His name became a political Rorschach test on the question of how to deal with black urban unrest. For example, in 1970, the Black Panthers declared war on police officers nationwide and called for a "revolutionary people's convention" to be held in Philadelphia in September. But Rizzo raided the Panthers' Philadelphia headquarters in August, confiscating shotguns, rifles, and pistols. The Panthers were stripped naked and searched. The next day, a photograph of the Panthers' bare buttocks moved across the Associated Press wire.

Rizzo hadn't given the order to strip the Panthers; he was home in bed when that occurred. But he wouldn't question the officers' action, and he wouldn't tolerate others questioning it either. Nevertheless, the truth remains that Rizzo was never willing to deal forthrightly with the members of the police department, both black and white, who were prone to use excessive force in dealing with black suspects. Paolantonio explains Rizzo's my-cops-right-or-wrong philosophy but wisely makes no attempt to justify or excuse it.

Rizzo was at his best, however, with the countless average people in whom he took a direct, personal interest and for whom he did favors. Paolantonio recounts how in 1971 Rizzo befriended a campaign hanger-on named Abie Kanefsky, "a troll of a man" with "a crooked nose and the voice of a hard-drinking tugboat pilot." Kanefsky made sure the mayor "had a cup of coffee, a fresh pack of Kents, and a book of matches on his desk each morning." When Kanefsky later became homeless, Rizzo dispatched his city solicitor to find an apartment for the little guy. He then called the landlord, "talked him down from $185-a-month to $125," and gave Kanefsky "an $8,000-a-year job making coffee at City Hall." Kanefsky, who today sells newspapers on a downtown Philadelphia streetcorner, "says he owes Frank Rizzo his life."

Eight years as mayor did nothing to weaken Rizzo's hands-on populist streak. A month before Rizzo left office, Rendell, who was then the city's district attorney, received a panicked call from the mayor. Rizzo asked Rendell to do him the "big favor" of getting jobs as county detectives for his two most trusted bodyguards, Tony Fulwood and Jimmy Turner. Paolantonio records Rendell's reflection on the call: "Here's the mayor of Philadelphia calling me, frantic, to take care of two ordinary black cops . . . what so-called liberal would ever do that?"

Rizzo Redux

During his second term as mayor, Rizzo tried to change the city's charter, which imposed a two-term limit. But by that time the blind eye he turned to police brutality had mobilized the city's black community against him. (Full disclosure: I worked against Rizzo's charter change effort and against Rizzo-backed candidates in several citywide elections.) The charter change effort fizzled, and it seemed for a while that Rizzo's political career was over. But in 1987, Rizzo, running as a Republican, made a comeback attempt against the city's first black mayor, Democrat Wilson Goode.

In 1985, Goode had presided over the police bombing of a home occupied by the radical black back-to-nature group MOVE. The bombing resulted in the deaths of six adults and five children and incinerated a struggling black neighborhood of 61 homes. For Philadelphia, it was a human tragedy and a national public relations fiasco. In the days following the disaster, many recalled that in a Rizzo-directed 1978 confrontation with MOVE, the only person to die was a police officer, James

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Ramp. The contrast wasn't lost on the city's black community. Nor, for that matter, were the conciliatory gestures and words that Rizzo had begun to offer in an attempt to reach out to blacks. Still, most observers gave Rizzo no chance of beating Goode. They were stunned when Rizzo lost by fewer than 20,000 votes out of over 650,000 cast.

After losing that election, Rizzo took to the airwaves with what quickly became the most popular radio call-in show in the Philadelphia region. Many of the callers were black, and they got to hear and sense the humorous, compassionate, lay-down-his-life-for-you Rizzo that the city's white ethnics had long known.

In 1991, Rizzo decided to make one last effort to recapture the mayor's office. The city's Republican chieftains opposed his bid for the nomination, but this time he did not merely stun them. This time he won.

As he headed toward the November general election against Rendell, Rizzo focused on the black community, not only for electoral reasons, but for historical and personal ones. He wanted to make up for the real and perceived wrongs he had committed against this part of the city family. He campaigned vigorously in the poor black neighborhoods where he had once been so despised. Local television news viewers were amazed by images of Rizzo leading anti-drug marches in black communities, rallying the crowds with the promise that he would restore order and revitalize the neighborhoods.

When Rizzo died before the election, thousands of Philadelphians turned out to mourn him in person, while tens of thousands more mourned him at home. In stultifying heat and humidity, the lines at Rizzo's funeral stretched for blocks around the cathedral. The faces of the mourners were white, black, and brown. As Paolantonio writes, Carmella Rizzo "greeted each mourner— lawyers and judges and police officers, truck drivers and waitresses and construction workers—like a member of the family." So much is true; I was there.

Paolantonio concludes that, had Rizzo lived, he would be mayor today. It's impossible to know whether that's so. But one thing is certain: For urban America to survive and prosper, it must recapture the inclusive sense of community, the color-blind outrage at lawlessness, and the warm personal touch that are Frank Rizzo's ultimate legacy to the City of Brotherly Love. □

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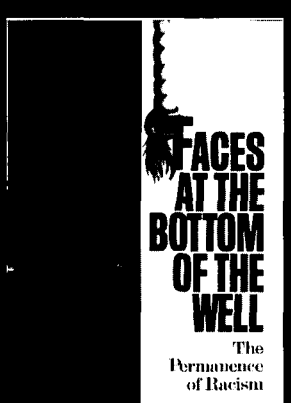

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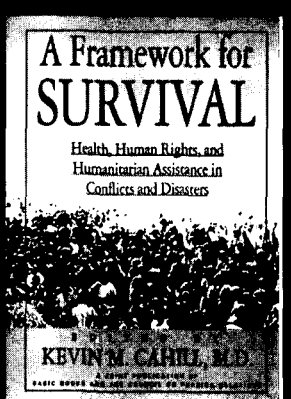

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The Romantic Hart

Trying to reinvent himself as a 20th-century Jefferson, Gary Hart again reveals his signal flaw

by Jonathan Rowe

The Good Fight: The Education of an American Reformer
Gary Hart, *Random House, $23*

There is a line in Gary Hart's evasive new autobiography that suggests what this book might and should have been. It comes just after one of the oblique constructions that illustrates what the book unfortunately became.

"The goal of public office may not be reached and opportunities for service may exist no more," Hart says, speaking of his life post-Donna Rice as though it were a 19th-century melodrama. But then he ventures forth a bit from his box-turtle reserve: "No longer a candidate for national office, a reformer would find himself at an awkward age: too old to start again and too young to surrender."

These words suggest the tragic human dimension to a tale portrayed in the press as buffoonery and farce. Here was a man of unusual intelligence and breadth, very possibly on the threshold of the presidency, who in an act of adolescent bravado threw it all away. The manager of George McGovern's idealistic campaign against Richard Nixon now suffers a Nixon-like exile, not for felony but for something almost worse—acting like a fool. He's had to watch a young and—in his view—upstart governor from Arkansas claim the issues and mantle that he had so diligently prepared.

Sadly, Hart fails both to tell his own story honestly and to shoulder the blame for his mistakes. The telling line comes near the end of *The Good Fight*, almost as an afterthought. Until then he chooses to hide, with the same stubborn defiance that got him into his mess in the first place. He stonewalls to the point of erasing himself from his own autobiography, speaking instead through an idealized cipher he calls "the reformer."

Jonathan Rowe is a contributing editor of The Washington Monthly.

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Hart justifies this extraordinary ruse—as he does all things in his life—on grounds of high public purpose: Henry Adams used the same device, after all, in *The Education of Henry Adams*, the better to focus on the important issues at hand. "By seeking to diminish the author's role," Hart writes, "it is hoped the reader can clearly focus on the idea and the ideal of reform in America." Come on, Gary.

Shrinking from the pain of self-exposure—evading the one issue he has to address before he can be taken seriously again on any other—Hart stumbles into another fiasco—this time a literary one. Instead of dealing with himself, he idealizes himself into a White Knight: Gary the Pure, who embodies the noble tradition that began with Jefferson and is kept alive by the likes of Vaclav Havel.

For all its flaws, though, *The Good Fight* reminds us why Hart was an unusual and important figure in American public life—a man with a restless intelligence, an instinctive distrust of orthodoxy and experts, and a commitment to the public good in the best Jeffersonian tradition. The book is an intellectual autobiography (the author is disinclined toward any other kind), and Hart's mind draws from a deep well: John Wesley, Kirkegaard, Tolstoy, Gandhi, and, finally, the American reform tradition beginning with Jefferson and culminating in the idol of Hart's young adulthood, John Kennedy.

This is not mere intellectual name-dropping. Hart shows a genuine engagement with these writers, one epitomized by Francis Thompson's "The Hound of Heaven," an intense and almost surreal narrative of a man chased like the biblical Jonah by the Absolute until he finally yields. The poem suggests the inner landscape of Hart's "reformer": essentially Protestant, engaged in a lonely, existential struggle against the forces of inertia and entrenched interest.

A reader would feel a little better, though, if Hart were not so relentlessly high-minded. As an adolescent, for example, wasn't he interested in *anything* besides John Wesley? One begins to suspect that the cards aren't all on the table, and that feeling grows through Hart's windy evocations of the Jeffersonian reform tradition on up through the influence of John Kennedy. Hart is of the generation just before the baby boom for which Kennedy's election was a defining moment; it caused the strands of his idealism to coalesce, he says, into a "secular mission" of public service and political reform.

WASHINGTON '93

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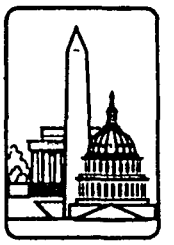

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The sentiment is sincere, as is everything in the book. But noble sentiments become real when they take root in life, and that's the fight that's missing in Hart's *Good Fight*. A reader discovers practically nothing, for example, about how Hart got involved in the McGovern campaign and exactly what he learned from that undertaking. Everything just wafts forward, powered by a romanticized impulsion called "reform."

A notable exception is an incident early in Hart's Senate career. Hart was elected in 1974 as part of the much-vaunted "Watergate Class." (He credits his victory to his bold reform platform, not mentioning the prior grassroots campaign against the Winter Olympics which helped create a political base in Colorado for Democrats like himself.) He quickly showed his political independence. His first legislative dilemma concerned the efforts of liberals to change Senate rules to make it easier to break conservative filibusters. Naturally, Hart felt drawn toward the liberal side. But Mike Mansfield, then the Majority Leader, won him over with his quiet argument that to fiddle with procedure, however vexatious, was to compromise the institutional integrity of the Senate.

Surely it didn't hurt Hart's prospects as a young senator to side with Mansfield; that's the kind of self-effacing detail that Gary the Pure glosses over. Still, the episode shows Hart at his best—willing to question his own liberal assumptions and McGovernist instincts (and alienating traditional Democratic constituencies in the process). Hart went on to become a leader of what are now called "New Democrats," but who are really Democrats in the Kennedy, rather than the McGovern or Hubert Humphrey, mold. He saw early on that the New Deal pieties wouldn't work any more, and embraced themes sounded often in this magazine. Democrats couldn't simply heap more burdens upon the nation's productive economy through taxes and regulations, for example; nor was the old Keynesian "stimulus" enough. They had to foster entrepreneurs and the productive economy generally through investment in new technologies and the like. Similarly, it wasn't enough for liberals to oppose the Pentagon. They needed a better concept of defense, not just a diminished

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one. Hart pushed for a seat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, generally considered a bastion for hawks, and became a leader in the "Military Reform" movement.

Hart on military reform comes on like Jimmy Conners in his prime: taut, aggressive, and sharp-edged. He points out that nations rarely reform their militaries until they've suffered a major defeat, which the U.S. hasn't yet. He skewers the Reagan weapons build-up and observes that Congress has to pay more attention to less contractor-intensive matters such as strategy and personnel. America's rapid victory in the Gulf War was due not to new weapons, he says, but rather to a strategic doctrine called "maneuver warfare" that he helped champion. Maneuver warfare is the doctrine that surprise works better than attrition: "Historical examples are the battles fought by Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee's cavalry forces, practically every war fought by the Israelis, and the early fights of Cassius Clay (before he became Muhammad Ali and invented rope-a-dope, which when one thinks about it is essentially attrition warfare in reverse").

That's Hart when his mind is engaged in the concrete. He has an uncommon ability to link the details of policy to large and evocative themes. But when he strays from subjects he really knows, like defense, he lapses into grumpy, B-level jeremiads against George Bush, short attention spans, sound-bite politics, "cleverness," and all the other things we already know are bad. Prominent people don't always grasp that the thoughts buzzing orchestrally in their brains are not uniformly brilliant.

Hart's notion of "reform," moreover, is gauzy and Romantic. Many Reaganites, for example, saw themselves as reformers, too. To them, the economic marketplace is a kind of cosmic purgative that fulfills Jefferson's call for a revolution every 20 years (which is a gauzy and Romantic notion, too). Articulating in a common-sense manner exactly why this notion doesn't cut it—why change must be social and political rather than just economic—is a challenge Democrats still face. Hart hasn't brought them much closer.

But the biggest problem is Hart's aversion to discussing reform as experience rather than just idea. He tells no stories of legislative battles and hardly mentions his political campaigns. It would be useful to know, for example, exactly how "the reformer" translated his national agenda into his politics in Colorado. This, after all, is where the proverbial rubber hits the road. There's no shortage of good ideas in Washington, but rather a shortage of political horsepower to accomplish them.

Hart's "reformer" is really a philosopher-prince who prefers the cool slopes of Olympus to the heated battles down below. There's nothing inherently wrong with this; the Senate needs philosophers as much as it needs legislative mechanics. But Hart's self-superiority can be hard to take. Time and again he portrays himself as the lone voice of virtue rising in vain against the venality and hide-bound thinking around him. Even when he's basically right—as when he calls for an oil import fee and a tax break for new domestic production by independents—he could at least acknowledge that such positions are not politically hurtful to a senator from Colorado. Hart undercuts his own virtue by making too much of it.

But the deeper cavity in the center of *The Good Fight* is the personal issue he refuses to address. Irrelevant to the future of America? Yes, but not to Hart's standing to take the status quo to task. If the reform impulse burned so deeply in his soul, then couldn't he have observed the minimal levels of probity needed to keep his presidential campaign on track? Toward the end of the book, Hart addresses the question in a few grudging paragraphs. "The reformer" he writes through gritted teeth, "continues to bear a sense of great responsibility to his family and supporters for his mistake in permitting a chain of events to be set up that would make a continuation of a serious national campaign of ideas, issues, and reforms impossible."

That could have been drafted by an account executive at Burson-Marsteller. A "chain of events"? The problem was Hart. But no, he says the blame lies less with himself than with the press, which blew the affair out of proportion and routinely violates the privacy of public figures. "The First Amendment," Hart notes, "provides the press a shield, not a sword."

He's right, of course. He's also right when he says that the relevant clues to a candidate's "character" lie principally "in the very visible conduct of public service," not in his personal affairs. The media's obsession with bedroom matters has done nothing to improve

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the quality of elected officials or of government generally, and probably has diminished both. But if the media act like imbeciles, then it takes an imbecile to the tenth power not to understand this, especially after 12 years in the Senate.

By laundering his own identity through the idealized "reformer," Hart appears to glomb onto the pantheon of reformers he extols in these pages: Jefferson, Kennedy, Gorbachev, Havel. "About some leaders there is a dimension beyond the reach of conventional criticism," he says, referring to the revelations regarding Kennedy's private life but very likely thinking also of his own. The comparison with Kennedy is a continuing theme. Hart saw his 1984 primary campaign against Walter Mondale, for example, as a rerun of Kennedy's 1960 campaign against Hubert Humphrey. One senses he felt entitled to the indulgences Kennedy routinely got away with, too. But Kennedy was savvy enough to know how far he could go; he played within the rules of the game as it existed at that time. It is hard to imagine Kennedy inviting the press to observe his personal life—as Hart did—and then bringing a Donna Rice to Washington for a weekend.

One senses Hart felt entitled to the indulgences Kennedy routinely got away with. But Kennedy was savvy enough to know how far he could go; he played within the rules of the game as it existed at that time. It is hard to imagine Kennedy inviting the press to observe his personal life—as Hart did—and then bringing a Donna Rice to Washington for a weekend.

Whatever else one says about Kennedy, moreover—and this goes for Clinton, too—there was no dark divide between his affairs with women and his embrace of life as a whole. Kennedy genuinely liked people, was curious about them and their motives, enjoyed politics as a game as well as a way to get things done. For Hart, by contrast, Donna Rice seems to exist across some dark chasm from the austere and lonely broodings of his mind. Strange as this may sound, Hart is in many ways a Victorian moralist ("cultural revolution made him skittish," he writes of the sixties) and as with the Victorians, his sense of duty and honor seems to have bred its opposite in the less visible corners of his life.

I write this sadly, because the pre-Rice Gary Hart was a political figure I truly admired. He had a genuine prophetic quality, a reflective side not common in Washington, a capacity to be in the game but not of it. I would have voted for him for president, fingers crossed. (His Louisiana lobbyist pal William Broadhurst worried me more than Donna Rice did.)

Perhaps that's why *The Good Fight* makes me feel let down a second time. When I finished it, I thought of a Sunday morning on Capitol Hill about 10 years ago. While sitting in a coffee shop, I noticed a hulking, bear-like figure in his overcoat walking slowly with a lady at his side. It was Tip O'Neill, out for his constitutional with his wife.

There was a humanity and warmth that one generally does not associate with Capitol Hill, especially in recent years. O'Neill represented much in politics that Gary Hart detested: the smoky back rooms, the deals, the hoary New Deal orthodoxies, the catering to interest groups. Tip probably doesn't know Kirkegaard from Ted Kluzewski. Yet he represented certain human qualities from which reformers of all stripes might well profit—the pedestrian virtues and basic human affinities that can count as much as jazzy ideas about energy and the budget and defense. H.L. Mencken said something about politicians once that reformers need to ponder: "The most pleasant men—and by far the most honest of them—are those that are looked on as 'machine pols.'" □

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POLITICAL BOOKNOTES

Peace-Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967
William Quandt
Brookings Books, $15.95

By Barry Rubin

American presidents, secretaries of State, and a good portion of the U.S. State Department have spent over a quarter-century trying to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. Today, success may be in sight, or is it merely another mirage? At any rate, no current issue has kept the United States so long engaged; no series of efforts even approaches it in complexity; no policy area has seen so many initiatives or frustrations.

For these reasons, William Quandt's new book is useful and timely. His status as a veteran observer and sometime participant makes him a good guide. Quandt served on the National Security Council between 1977 and 1979 and participated in the Camp David negotiations. He has written a huge amount about U.S. Middle East policy over many years.

All this research and experience is used here to good effect in providing the first detailed, comprehensive narrative history of these complex events. Although one can quarrel with many details and points of analysis, the basic story is presented with considerable clarity and insight.

Yet so much has been written about the Arab-Israeli conflict, so many trees with deep, entangled roots obscure the horizon, that it is easy to become lost. The cast of characters makes *War and Peace* look like a one-act play. A whole dictionary is needed to explain the issue's vocabulary of terms—each with its own precise meaning and historical context, each with its own bias and implication—such as "Black September," "disengagement agreements," "two-state solution," "territories for peace," "Rogers Plan," "Reagan Plan," and so on.

In Washington, scores of experts, journalists, and bureaucrats have built careers on writing, chatting, and—often very badly—trying to interpret this massive story. Quandt writes of the "alarming regularity" with which "American presidents have found themselves dealing with Middle East crises for which they were poorly prepared." The poor quality of the experts as well as the general incompatibility of American and Middle Eastern political culture have contributed to some of the more memorable policy debacles in a number of administrations.

U.S. action in this region has been based on several premises about national interest, some of them clearly exaggerated. It was argued that the Arab-Israeli conflict was the overriding (often seeming to be the only) issue in the Middle East. Unless the United States found some solution, the Soviets would supposedly take over the area, the Arab world would turn to communism or Islamic fundamentalism, and wars would erupt at any given moment.

In fact, and here is a point usefully applied to other crises, the conflict has a logic of its own. As for the American goal of containing instability, the overwhelming economic, diplomatic, and strategic assets of the United States were highly successful in preserving its interest. The Cold War was already won in the Middle East when the outcome was still in doubt in other parts of the world.

As for ending the conflict, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat once said that 99 percent of the cards were in America's hands. But as Sadat himself showed when he made his own breakthrough by going to Israel (an act that greatly discomfited the Carter Administration at first), the local players were in control. The Arabs had to be ready to accept Israel's existence.

The deal being discussed today is close to what the Arab states and Palestinians might have achieved in 1967 or 1977 had they then been willing to live with a Jewish state in their midst. True, during the second half of the eighties, a conservative Israeli government offered considerably less, but that era was more of an exception than the norm.

In its broad outline, the process has been one in which Arab states and Palestinians first discovered their inability to destroy Israel through conventional military, terrorist, or political forces; then underwent a long—still uncompleted—process to reconcile themselves to that fact. Meanwhile, they exploited the conflict to muster a great deal of political support, money, and rationalization for their own failures on economic development and democracy. It was this long and bitter experience, casualties and wasted resources, the collapse of their major ally in Moscow, unquestionable U.S. dominance, the defeat of the Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic fundamentalism, and Saddam Hussein's radical Arab nationalism that made them begin to change course. But this issue will continue to be one of Clinton's major foreign policy problems.

Barry Rubin is a fellow at the Johns Hopkins University Foreign Policy Institute and teaches at Tel Aviv University. He is the author of the forthcoming book, Revolution Until Victory?: The Politics of the PLO, *published by the Harvard University Press.*

In Defense of Garbage
Judd Alexander
Praeger, $22.95.

By Hannah Holmes

Pity poor packaging: reviled by all, understood by none but its creators. Packaging, the fulcrum on which the see-saw groans, weighted on one end by howling environmentalists, and on the other by howling industrialists.

"It's all wasteful and hideous!" wail environmentalists.

"It affords you the distinctly American privilege of eating hot dogs that have been sitting on the shelf for six months," bellow the industrialists. "And what you moss noggins know about economics and

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The Market wouldn't fill a juice box."

Judd Alexander's book promises to do absolutely nothing about this impasse. In fact, with schoolyard fervor, Alexander drops his full weight on the industrial side of the teeter-totter in an attempt to knock his rivals through the ozone hole. Alas, with a little more brain and a little less brawn, this book could have been a bridge. As it stands, the sarcasm, the name-calling, and the strategic omissions of evidence make the excavation of Alexander's valuable knowledge a dull chore indeed.

There are nuggets to be had, hard labor notwithstanding. A particularly bright bit is his consideration of demographics. How is it, he asks, that we fume and fuss over foam cups and beer cans, but ignore the massive manufacturing costs implicit in furnishing a seven-bedroom home, or the airplane trip implicit in fresh melon and imported prosciutto?

Also illuminating are some adjustments to our national perception of garbage. For one thing, the 156 million ton figure with which we're all now intimate doesn't represent what we throw away in the dump every year; it's what we generate, commercial and institutional sources included. It doesn't account for beer cans or washing machines that are recycled, or clothing that goes to Goodwill. And it means the average American generates 1.9 pounds of household discards a day, not 3.47. We also chuck uncountable tonnage of such common stuff as construction and demolition debris and cat litter. Add these things to the pie graph, and presto! Those embarrassingly large wedges of plastic packaging and food waste and grass clippings shrink.

Alexander's keen eye for symbols, and their abuse, makes for fun reading, too. He offers a spirited and respectable case for ball-point pens, which for the crime of disposability have been indicted by numerous government agencies. Americans over the age of five throw out a whole ounce of pens a year, he says. If this is a terrible thing to do, what is the suggested alternative? Pencils, crayons, and chalk are disposable, too. Shall we return to the fountain pen?

Furthermore, why don't environmentalists call newspapers "disposables"? Why do they exempt disposables like toilet paper and auto fuel? Why don't they demand a "newspaper bill" to force publishers to take back their papers?

With decades of service to the American Can Company and James River Corporation, though, Alexander is at his best when he defends packaging. He has explanations for almost every bottle and plastic wrapper and cardboard container and sheet of shrink-wrap, and most of them make sense. If a quarter-ounce wrapper will prevent the breakage and waste of a four-ounce bottle, after all, aren't we still ahead of the game? And if a few ounces of designer plastic can bar microbes from a side of beef, then the supermarket throws away less and people enjoy their steak more. Alexander's store of knowledge on the function and history of packaging is helpful—a product that truly could have fostered some understanding between environmentalists and industrialists.

Unfortunately, even his best points are tainted by a quarrelsome posture and not a few glaring inconsistencies that undermine his credibility. Alexander's paper roots really start to show when he produces his own off-the-cuff comparison of paper and plastic grocery bags, and counts biodegradability among paper's advantages. On other pages, he dismisses biodegradability as a red herring served up by journalists, saying biodegradation creates dangerous landfill conditions and that the solution to roadside litter is to pick it up or prevent it.

His most annoying inconsistency concerns the role of consumers in society. He's all too happy to ascribe infallible judgment to the general public when the packaging of their favorite beverage or snack food is under the environmentalists' gun: "We have yet to learn the folly of substituting political and/or bureaucratic judgments for the wisdom of the marketplace."

If the question is the management of used materials, however, Alexander rails against public ignorance: People don't understand the problems caused by recycling, they think biodegradation is some form of natural magic, and they distrust incinerators. "They are concerned about increased truck traffic, odors, and falling property values. But most of all, they are concerned about danger!" He waves away the issues of air pollution from incineration; dioxin is an over-rated hazard and under control; most toxic heavy metals come from batteries, which shouldn't be burned. Trust in The Market to remove the other sources.

In Defense of Garbage isn't a defense of garbage. It's a narrower defense of packaging and of the free-market system that suckles it. It has next to nothing to say about the environment, and even less about the notion of living within our earthly means. At best, it's an intelligent apology for the size of the industrial garbage bag. At worst, it's foul-tempered playground scrapping. In the final analysis, it's another handful of sand thrown in the eyes of those searching for a way to break up the brawl.

Hannah Holmes is a contributing editor at Garbage Magazine.

Job Opening

The Washington Monthly will soon have an opening for a reporter-editor. Desirable qualifications include practical experience working in or writing about politics and government. More important are intelligence, humor, and the willingness to work long hours for low pay. Applications should be accompanied by a list of three references and by writing samples that demonstrate fact-gathering and analytical ability.

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Assignment Pentagon: The Insider's Guide to the Potomac Puzzle Palace
Maj. Gen. Perry M. Smith USAF (Ret.)
Brassey's, $30

By Jennifer Elsea

Retired Air Force Maj. Gen. Perry M. Smith, now CNN's chief military analyst, says this guide is designed to help not only those headed for a first assignment at the Pentagon "who would like to get the kind of informal advice that they might get over a couple of beers at the bar," but also for others interested in how the Pentagon operates. My guess is you *will* learn a lot from this book, but for the tougher questions about life in the Pentagon—and for some of its more intriguing trivia—you'll need another source.

Smith provides a map to help you find your way through the building's labyrinth of hallways, but keep in mind that the place seems to have been designed to confuse the enemy. The building is supposed to allow a brisk walker (which newcomers quickly become) to get from any one location to any other in under 10 minutes. This, however, takes a lot of practice. Plan extra time for getting lost.

(Hallway trivia question: Whose portrait is the only one in Pentagon history to get defaced? Answer: General Merrill A. "Tony" McPeak, current Air Force chief of staff and aspiring successor to Colin Powell. An unknown, felt marker-wielding artist drew a non-regulation mustache under the general's nose. It is suspected the perpetrator was protesting McPeak's new design of the Air Force uniform, which very much resembles that of a Japanese commercial airline pilot.)

Smith recommends you join the Pentagon Officers Athletic Club (POAC). He touts POAC as a "great place . . . to exercise your network of contacts." So that's what all those officers who spend half the day down there are doing.

For readers interested in food, Smith notes that opportunities to grab a quick bite are plentiful. During the summer, he recommends the center court snack bar (for you Pentagonians, he's talking about "Thigh Land"). He doesn't mention, however, that far and away the best deals are offered by the services' separately run officers' "open messes," where you can get a fancy meal served to you on real dishes by actual waiters. (And the price is unbeatable: Entrees of the day normally run from about $4.25 to $6.00 and the food is superb.) Of course, you need at least two stars on your shoulders to get in the door.

Smith mentions that the DoD telephone directory is always out-of-date, but the greater problem is that it's next to impossible to find an office in it if you aren't exactly sure of what the office is called. Offices change names as quickly as personnel rotate and often perform functions entirely different from what their titles imply. And when the Pentagon has been ordered to cut headquarters personnel, it occasionally just shuffles them around and assigns them, on paper, to field units. For example, the Air Force staff's operational support, which works directly for the Air Force chief of staff, is not actually assigned to the staff. It falls under the "Air Force District of Washington," headquartered at the nearby Bolling Air Force Base.

For the most part, the book reads like selections offered as "Officer Professional Development" at any of the service schools. It's good advice for officers at any level of military staff. But beginners at the Puzzle Palace shouldn't be surprised to discover that some of those who get ahead break a lot of the rules and often operate under their own set.

Indeed, Smith warns against the traps of self-serving modus operandi: misplaced loyalty, personality conflicts, and intra-service rivalries that neither serve the interests of the organization nor the nation. The impression the reader gets is that the supposedly lofty level of integrity and competence at the Pentagon keeps the place honest, and reason generally reigns.

Smith, therefore, omits any explanation of procurement scandals which are driven by, at worst, lies, and, at best, willful disregard for the truth. He does, however, assure us that as the "black"—i.e., secret—programs of the eighties become declassified, critics of defense R&D spending will fall silent, and some may even shed a tear of remorse about how wrong they were to distrust the military.

What this book sorely lacks is a genuine sense of the forces of bureaucratic politics that shape the Pentagon's peculiar culture and lead to such peculiar policy. How did we end up paying $600 for a hammer anyway? What series of insane decisions lead us to sink billions into useless airplanes like the C-17? If anyone can explain *those* aspects of Pentagon life over a beer, I'm buying.

Jennifer Elsea, a former Army captain, is an intern at The Washington Monthly.

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Heroes of My Time
Harrison B. Salisbury
Walker & Co., $19.95

By Daniel Schorr

When *The Washington Monthly* called to ask me to review a new book by Harrison Salisbury about 20 of his personal heroes, I ventured the guess that they would include a *New York Times* publisher, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, and a figure from Salisbury's China experience. I was almost right about the publisher (Iphigene Ochs Sulzberger was the owner who designated publishers from her family) and about Khrushchev, but hardly prepared for seven entries from China.

The 20 make an odd assortment—some dead, some alive, some famous, some largely unknown. The author says that he deliberately "passed over the most renowned figures of our times" like Churchill, DeGaulle, the Roosevelts, and John F. Kennedy, but then Robert F. Kennedy makes the cut. The Chinese nominees are mainly victims of the regime's oppression, but then there is Premier Zhou Enlai, "the consummate courtier" of Mao Zedong for 40 years.

About the time one is ready to conclude that the ticket for admission into the Salisbury pantheon is having been part of his vast journalistic experience, one comes across two whom he has never met—Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov and Edgar Snow, the biographer of Mao Zedong. Snow is one of four journalistic heroes, along with Homer Bigart, longtime correspondent for the *New York Herald Tribune*; David Halberstam; and Roger Wilkins (who shares billing with his law professor wife, Patricia King).

Salisbury's principal domestic theme is civil rights. Aside from Wilkins and King, there are sketches of Cecil Roberts and Bessie Edsell, white and black women who fought for civil rights in Birmingham, Alabama. Also, he chooses Sue and Lawrence Brooks, warriors for desegregation in Boston with whom Salisbury climbed mountains in the Adirondacks. And then, hardly needing more posthumous attention, there's Malcolm X, whom Salisbury met during a stint as national editor of the *Times*.

An odd assemblage, but why not? This is Salisbury's book, and after a long and distinguished career, he should get to name any heroes he wants. But, lacking any new perception, any real unifying theme, this becomes a conceit, a gathering together of left-over file folders. One could have hoped for more from a Pulitzer Prize laureate with more than 20 books behind him. These biographical sketches, though occasionally interesting, lack a sense of recollection in tranquillity that Theodore H. White, for instance, brought to *America in Search of Itself* and *In Search of History—A Personal Adventure*.

With Salisbury, we get less insight than hyperbole. "The Bobby [Kennedy] of 1968 knew there were questions to which no one, not even a Kennedy, had the answers. . . . He understood life as he had never understood it before, because he understood death."

Or this: "David Halberstam's exploration of the faded American dream, powered by a relentless mind and ever-renewing physical strength, was transforming him into the conscience of the American heritage."

On matters of which I have independent knowledge—like Khrushchev and the Soviet Union—I am troubled to find Salisbury shaky about his facts. Salisbury writes that after his 1959 tour of the United States, "Khrushchev was as happy as a small boy. He rushed back to Moscow to prepare" for a reciprocal visit by President Eisenhower. In fact, after his American trip, Khrushchev rushed off to Peking to face a Chinese Politburo seething with resentment over his romance with capitalist America. On the way back to Moscow from Peking, he stopped at Baku for a speech to renew pressure on the Allied position in Berlin. His romance with Eisenhower was already in trouble.

Salisbury writes that when word of the downing of the U-2 spy plane on May 1, 1960 reached Moscow, "Khrushchev sought out the American ambassador, Llewellyn (Tommy) Thompson, at a diplomatic reception. 'You have to help me,' he told Tommy, 'I'm in a terrible spot.'" That does not square with what the late Ambassador Thompson told me at the time—that he had no knowledge of the flight, let alone the downing of the U-2, until Khrushchev publicly announced it before the Supreme Soviet, pointing to a flabbergasted American ambassador in the diplomatic gallery.

Salisbury also has a way of stating as fact what can only be matters of conjecture. Consider this almost novelistic surmise about Khrushchev's visit to the IBM building in San Jose, California. "I caught a glance exchanged between Khrushchev and one of his aides. They knew what [Thomas J.] Watson was showing them, even if Watson didn't. I knew, too, because I had read my Marx. I knew that the great goal of communism, and hence of the Soviet system, was to abolish the distinction between blue collar and white collar. . . . But, here in America, the citadel of capitalism, the historic distinctions of blue and white collar had been obliterated. . . . That was the nuance that underlay the quick glance between Khrushchev and his aide. . . ."

What a glance! To think that I was there and missed the story of Khrushchev in San Jose facing up to the coming defeat of communism!

Salisbury continues, "When later Khrushchev proclaimed, 'We will bury you,' and 'Your children will live under communism,' I knew that he was only whistling in the wind." But those remarks were made not "later," but earlier. "We will bury you" was in 1956, in my presence, at a reception in Moscow amid rising disillusionment with communism in East Europe. "Your children will live under communism" was actually "Your grandchildren will live under socialism," and was uttered in 1957 in Khrushchev's "Face the Nation" interview on CBS and again in 1959 during his "Kitchen Debate" with Vice President Nixon.

Details, details. But they suggest that under the exterior of a journalist, there lurks in Salisbury a romantic novelist who can rearrange history and divine meanings from glances. No one but a romantic could write of Khrushchev, "No man could have married a woman so straight and warm and intelligent as Nina Petrovna without a good heart. Nor possess a son so sympathetic, understanding—realistic—as Sergei Khrushchev."

No one should begrudge Harrison Salisbury his eclectic collection of heroes, however much time may have blurred some details. Whether they help to illuminate the past is another matter.

Daniel Schorr is a senior news analyst for National Public Radio. He opened the CBS News Bureau in Moscow in 1955.

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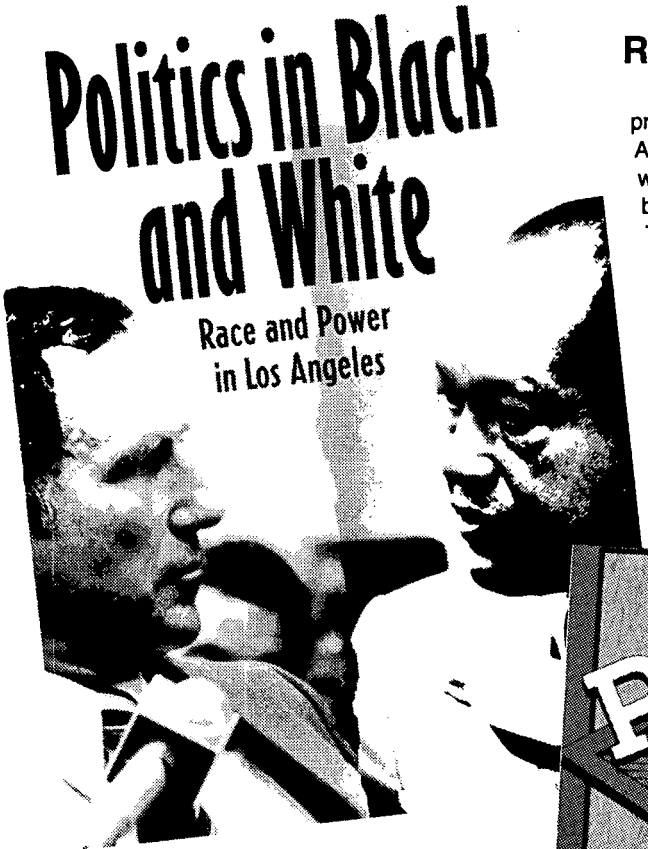

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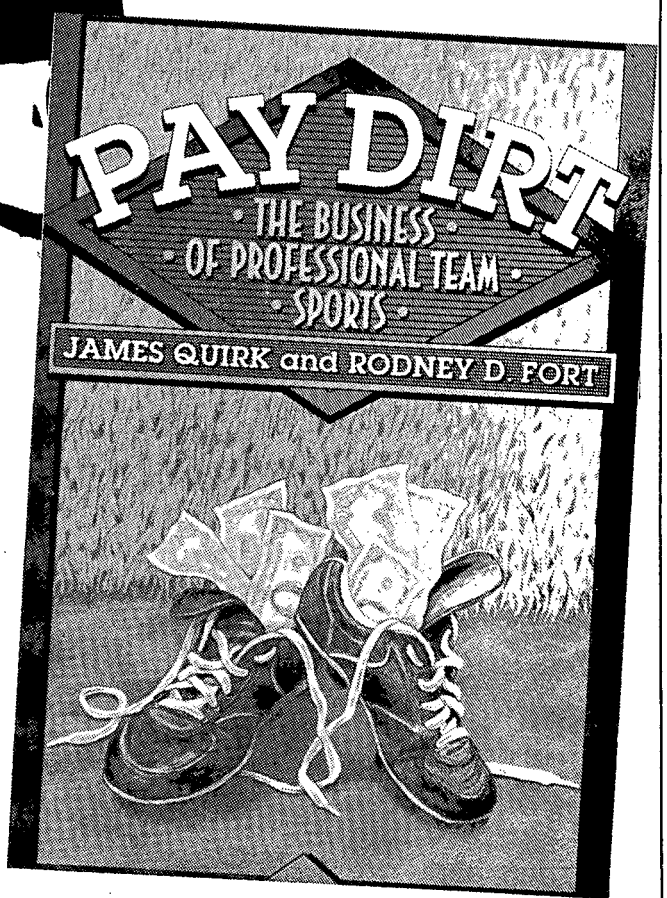

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